

*A Charlotte Mason Writing Plan:
from Copywork to Composition*



Grades 1 to 6

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Introduction

The Benefits of Narration, Copywork, and Dictation

See one, do one, teach one. This is a saying commonly associated with medical school. Basically, medical students watch a procedure, perform the procedure, and then teach the procedure to someone else. This method helps medical students tie the theory behind their studies to the real world application of practicing medicine. Many believe that this methodology works because it involves different learning styles, ensuring understanding and competency on the part of the medical student. Essentially, this process closes the loop by having the student taking in information, interacting with the information, and reproducing that information appropriately.

While this adage is commonly used in medical schools across the country, the systematic approach of seeing one, doing one, and teaching one is used by many teachers for many subjects. In fact, Charlotte Mason's method of teaching writing to young children also has at its core the elements of this three-step process. Basically, when children are asked to narrate, transcribe and take dictation, they are seeing, doing, and teaching. This is why Ms. Mason's methods work.

In the following pages, I'll attempt to explore, in more depth, narration, copywork, and dictation, individually and collectively. Also, I'll cover how to incorporate more narrating into the grammar and spelling aspect of the writing process.



Narrations

The Act of Retelling



“Narrating is an art, like poetry-making or painting, because it is there, in every child’s mind, waiting to be discovered, and is not the result of any process of disciplinary education.”

Charlotte Mason

Seeing:

Narrations are foundational in teaching children to write, but when a child narrates, he has to have something to say. There has to be some input of information into the child’s mind either from information heard or read. This is why living books are so important. Living books are well-written books that speak to children, capturing their attention and their imaginations with truth and beauty, and filling them with treasures of information that serve to create a desire for more knowledge.

Doing:

The act of narrating itself is the “doing.” When a child narrates, he has to use many skills to accurately retell the information. He has to listen attentively. He has to understand the information. He has to remember the information. And he has to find words of his own to retell that information. These are the same basic skills involved with writing.

Teaching:

When a child narrates, he is also teaching or passing on information to someone else. In order to do this effectively, he has to truly understand the passage he has heard or read. This is why the content of the narration is important. Children should narrate across the curriculum starting with simple facts from simple stories to more complex ideas from classical material and subjects of content—history, science, bible, and literature. In this way, the information is impressed upon the child’s memory far more than if rote memorization is employed, simply because the student will understand the information and know it. Narration may seem like a simple process, but it is a very effective and very powerful tool when put into practice.

Oral Narrations

How to: Read all **or part** of the story only once, before requiring the student to narrate! It will require him to pay attention. Simply ask your student to tell you what he has just heard or read.

If your student has trouble with this process, show him how to narrate by demonstrating the process for him. This will help him to *see* the process in action. (You may role-play where he is the teacher and you, the parent, become the student—then switch.)

The Benefits of Oral Narrations: Besides all of the previously mentioned benefits, oral narrations teach students to think on their feet and to speak formally, rather than write informally.

As most of us go about our daily routines, we do tend to speak informally, using slang, informal sentence structure, and colloquial expressions. But when a student narrates, he has to remember the content of the information he has to retell. Because this information did not originate from within the student's own mind, he has to rely on the original passage as his source of information. And since that information is laced with the author's style and word choice, the vocabulary and style as well as the main idea of the passage are recalled together. The information and the style are inseparable because they are impressed upon the child's brain simultaneously.

Think of the way in which most children are taught the letters of the alphabet, by singing their abc's. For those of us that learned our abc's via this song, even now when searching the dictionary, the rhythm of that song plays in the background of our minds. The same thing happens with style. Style is, in essence, the music behind the words.

When a child is first learning to narrate, his ability to remember may not be very strong. In those instances, he will attempt to plug the holes in his memory with words that are already in his memory bank. When he does this, his speech comes across as informal and choppy. This is why classic literature and non-twaddle reading is important to a child's ability to write. The more well read a child is, the better he will be able to plug those holes with more appropriate vocabulary. And once his skills of memorization improve, he will be able to recall the story more closely to the author's original writing—vocabulary usage, style, and content.

When my children first begin narrating, their sentences are typically structured as they are in their everyday speech; however, after continued practice, their oral narrations begin to take on the style of the original passage.

Written Narrations

Around the age of 10, Ms. Mason required students to write down their narrations, for themselves. Many students can do this earlier. If your student is able, have him write as much as he can, as well as he can, even around the age of 8.

Full-length narrations and written summations are two different ways in which children may write their narrations. Written summations are important because they help students identify the main thread or central idea of a passage. But for some children, summarizing can be difficult. However, the length of written summations makes them more ideal for the beginning writer, simply because there is less to write.

In our home, my daughter began doing full-length narrations first. Now that my daughter can do both, she alternates between full-length narrations and written summations. My son, who is 9, is learning to write summations first. He begins by dictating his full-length narrations to me, and then we summarize the material together. From there, he writes his one paragraph summation.

Full-length Written Narrations:

Either read the selection to your student or have him read it himself, once. Rather than telling you what he has heard, your student will rewrite the story from memory, in full. Writing narrations is a much more complicated process for the student, because he has to physically write as well as tell. And for students, writing and thinking simultaneously is more difficult. For this reason, I recommend that students continue to orally narrate as they learn to write their narrations. There is value in doing both because it helps the students to review what they want to say before attempting to put it down on paper.

Written Summations: .

At the end of each oral narration, ask your child to summarize the reading selection by identifying the beginning, the middle, and the end. (If the reading selection is more descriptive and doesn't have a normal storyline, ask the student who or what the selection is about. Ask for a couple of supportive details. This would suffice for a written summation.) He should be able to write his summation in about three to six sentences

A Difference of Opinion:

Written narrations alone are not enough.

I came across the writings of Leonardo da Vinci while working on the Middle Ages. When it came to practicing the art of painting, he said—

“Those who are in love with practice without knowledge are like the sailor who gets into a ship without rudder or compass and who never can be certain whether he is going. Practice must always be founded on sound theory, and to this Perspective is the guide and the gateway; and without this nothing can be done well in the matter of drawing...”

This statement brought to the forefront of my mind an area in which I disagree with Ms. Mason—the practicing of composition without the teaching of composition. There is a certain amount of knowledge about the doing of an activity that is required when practicing that activity.

According to Ms. Mason, *Home Education*, Volume 1 of the Charlotte Mason Series on the art of narrating—

“Children narrate by nature. **Narrating is an art, like poetry making or painting**, because it is *there*, in every child's mind, waiting to be discovered, and is not the result of any process of disciplinary education. A creative fiat calls it forth. 'Let him narrate'; and the child narrates, fluently, copiously, in ordered sequence, with fit and graphic details, with a just choice of words, without verbosity or tautology, so soon as he can speak with ease. “

On the teaching of composition, she wrote—

“Our business is to provide children with material in their lessons, and *leave the handling of such material to themselves*. If we would believe it, composition is as natural as jumping and running to children who have been allowed due use of books. They should narrate in the first place, and they will compose, later readily enough; but they should not be taught 'composition.'”

On the subject of teaching composition, I extrapolate Leonardo da Vinci's opinion of practice in the area of drawing and apply it to all of the arts, specifically writing. In other words, Leonardo da Vinci's quote could be re-written as such—

Practice must always be founded on sound theory, and to this *Structure* is the guide and the gateway; and without this, nothing can be done well in the matter of *writing*.

With this in mind, I teach my older children how to structure their writing via outlining. I teach my children to compose within a given framework. This framework provides them a compass of sorts so that they know where their writing is headed.

Simultaneously, I allow my students opportunity to narrate freely so as to develop a love and passion for writing. For when children write about the things their minds are wrestling with, their writing is many times better than when they are assigned tasks. But without these tasks, they will lack the development of the skills that eventually give way to true freedom of expression. Choosing between narrations and writing exercises is akin to choosing between beautiful music and piano drills; when in fact, for most of us, without drills, there can be no beautiful music.

Copywork

Copying a Passage Exactly as Written



Transcription is the word Ms. Mason often used when referring to copywork. She wrote that copywork should be the primary method in which elementary age children should be taught to write. She recommended that children of 8 or 9 transcribe for 10 to 15 minutes at most. Transcription was used as an introductory lesson in spelling, while simultaneously teaching handwriting.

As well as the above-mentioned benefits, copywork also allows students to take in words, grammar instruction, and beautiful ideas. As your child copies the model before him, stay near so that you are able to correct any problems immediately. Ms. Mason was a strong advocate in learning a skill correctly the first time.

Seeing:

When a child transcribes a passage, he has to copy letters, words, and punctuation. And in order to transcribe it *correctly*, he has to *really* see it. This is a seeing that impresses the information upon the child's brain.

Children often skim when reading and don't pay attention to all of the punctuation on the page. When a child reads, the focus is on the words, and punctuation is barely noticed, if at all. With copywork, we have to teach our children to see everything that is there—every dot and dash.

Before your child begins, discuss the model with him. Point out the grammatical elements that are present. Stay near him as he writes so that his letter formation is done correctly. In other words, help him *to see* all of the details and reproduce the model exactly as written.

Once a child can successfully and comfortably copy a couple of sentences of average length, he is ready to proceed to dictation—studied dictation.

Doing:

One of the obvious lessons involved with copying a passage is penmanship. Ms. Mason emphasized quality over quantity, giving the student an amount to copy appropriate to his abilities. Too much, and the child becomes distracted and his writing careless.

Teaching:

Ms. Mason did not teach composition in the traditional sense. She purposefully chose to let her students learn the fundamentals of language arts through immersion in living books. And while I believe that her methods work, I think that adding an element of teaching (aka narrating) by the student on the copywork selection will help the student learn grammar with more ease; so, to close the loop, have your child explain various elements of his copywork to you. Pick those that are appropriate to his age and abilities. For the very beginning writer, this would be starting every sentence with a capital letter and ending with a period. For older students, it may be explaining why the semi-colon was used. This works best if the information was discussed before he began copying the selection.

Outlining—Advanced Copywork

Initially, children learn to copy letters as part of handwriting practice. Later, they transition to copying words, sentences, and paragraphs. When copying words, they learn to link letters properly (spelling) to produce the desired word. When copying sentences, they learn to link words properly to produce a single idea. When copying paragraphs, they learn to link sentences to produce an elaborate, more detailed, yet unified thought.

Outlining provides a way for children to take a step back from the details of a longer work and study its structure. In other words, outlining will allow the students to see the outline of the forest, without having to focus on the individual trees.

Students can reap the benefits of copying the longer paper without the busywork of copying copious amounts of writing. If a child has progressed to transcription passages and dictation passages of paragraph length, and is able to produce his own *full-length* written narrations, copying page-length passages, are unnecessary. But it is necessary for him to understand how longer papers are organized. Sequential order isn't enough. Chronological order isn't enough. Writing is far more sophisticated than that and students need to study various types of writing in order to be able to produce sophisticated work of their own.

Outlining also provides the added benefit of teaching children how to research various articles or references and how to skim long passages to find information they need. Narrating alone will not do this.

Studied Dictation

The act of writing from an oral reading



Seeing:

Studied dictation differs from “cold dictation” in that children are taught from their dictation model before they expected to recreate the model on paper. The process only takes about 15 minutes, more for older students with more complicated models. The goal is to teach the students to understand the grammar usage, the spelling of unfamiliar words, and the choice of words by the author. In this way, the children are allowed to dissect the model—its meaning and its presentation. By studying the model first, students are seeing and taking in valuable information.

The goal in dictation is to teach children to write correctly, and from memory, the sentences or clauses they have just heard. Ms. Mason allowed her students to view the passage and study it before attempting to write it from dictation. She then wrote any unknown words on the board that were more difficult for the students. For those unfamiliar words, she allowed the students to practice writing them a few times so that they could visualize the words properly. She then erased the board and read each passage only once. From this one reading, the children wrote; however, if a child made a mistake, she physically covered the mistake as he continued to write so that the student was not allowed to visualize and internalize the error. After dictation, he was allowed to correct any errors he may have made.

For unfamiliar words, have your student keep a spelling notebook nearby. As you cover new words, have him practice writing the new word just before the dictation. Also place the word in a word list for later review.

Doing:

Dictation, for the child, involves the act of “doing” penmanship, spelling, and grammar. When a child writes from dictation, he is required to remember the correct words and their spelling and the correct punctuation that accompanies the passage.

Teaching:

After a child writes from dictation, the teacher should ask him to explain why he wrote the passage the way he did. **But to avoid the explanation of the errors being implanted in his memory, mark the mistakes first and then ask him to explain what he did correctly—regarding words and punctuation.** In adding this extra step, the act of teaching (aka narrating) is incorporated into the dictation exercise. (If your student keeps a grammar notebook, have him write the rules in the appropriate place as he comes to them.)

For the child who has never done dictation, start by reading the passage as many times as necessary so that your child memorizes the sentences. Work down to one reading per 2 or 3 sentences or main clauses. This is an advanced skill and may require time to achieve. Be patient, but persistent. (If needed, allow your student to repeat the model back to you before he writes. Some students may need this reinforcement; others may not.)

Greater Than the Sum of its Parts



While narration, copywork, and dictation are each valuable when done independent of one another, when united they are more effective because of the synergism they create.

- Narration teaches the student how to communicate, proceeding from facts to ideas, from the easy to the more complicated, from the concrete to the abstract.
- Copywork teaches the student how to spell and write correctly, and impresses beautiful words upon his mind.
- Dictation teaches the student how to put words and ideas on paper correctly without a model.

Narrations alone will not teach a child to write; copywork alone will not teach a child to write; and neither will dictation. But together, after a time, the combined steps teach children to write without effort or apprehension. When the older student is called upon to write, he knows what to say, how to word it, and how to put it on paper.

The process is gentle, effective, and complete. It fills the child's mind with the beauty of truth and the grandeur of ideas, as long as the material they narrate is filled with truth and ideas. They are charmed by the worlds they come across and desire to learn more about them. And naturally, the information within them desires to find its way out to others around them. And with diligent practice at copywork and dictation, the students have the skills to communicate in written form. Properly equipped, they enjoy communicating with others the treasures that they have uncovered in their books.

My Write from History 6-Year Writing Plan					
Grade	Foundational Writing Skills			Cross Curriculum Writing (Weekly)	End of Year Writing Goals
	Narration	Copywork (Doubles as handwriting practice)	Dictation		
First	Listen and narrate	Letters to sentences	N/A	Oral narrations	Letter Formation
Second	Listen and narrate	2 to 3 sentences	N/A (unless student is motivated and requests dictation)	Oral narrations, 1 sentence in 2 content subjects May be w. narrations or copywork. Depends on student.	Become competent at copywork Work on handwriting
Third	Read, oral narrations try written summations	3 to 4 sentences	Studied Dictation 3 to 4 sentences	Oral narrations, 2-3 sentences in 2 content subjects May be w. narrations or copywork.	Comfortable and successful with dictation. Improved spelling and punctuation in narrations.
Fourth	Read, oral narrations written summations	Continue copywork Average 4-6 sentence paragraphs	Studied Dictation Average 4-6 sentence paragraphs	Oral narrations, written narrations (work with mom on full-length narration 1/week alternate subjects.)	Able to write own summations. Able to write full-length narrations.
Fifth	Read, oral narrations written summations alternate with full written narrations	Continue copywork (Average 4-6 sentence paragraphs)	Studied Dictation (Same length as copywork)	Oral narrations, Independent full-length narrations, at least once per week.	Learn to write a paragraph via outlining with a topic sentence, supporting details, and a conclusion.
Sixth	Read, oral narrations written summations Occasionally replace written full narration with 3-P paper	Continue copywork Average 4-6 sentence paragraphs	If dictation is too easy, transition to non-studied dictation	Write 1-paragraph paper per week and 1 full-length narration per week.	Learn to write a 3-paragraph paper.

The plan behind the schedule:

1. Start at the beginning, teaching with narration, copywork, and dictation
2. Specify a goal for the year and teach to that end
3. Each subsequent year, build on the previous year's goal
4. Once a skill has been learned, require that skill to be demonstrated at regular intervals the following year

The schedule above is just one way to teach writing and is an organized attempt to have students learn to structure 3-paragraph papers by the end of 6th grade while simultaneously using narration, copywork, and dictation to teach the child how to write.

Creating your own schedule: (See the blank form on page 18)

To create your own schedule, determine where your child should be by the end of 6th. (Since I want my 7th grader to work on 5-paragraph essays, I determined that 6th grade should be the year we focus on 3-paragraph papers.) Work backwards from there to determine what pre-requisites your student needs to have before the 6th grade goal can be accomplished. Continue to work backwards to your child's current grade level.

Once a child has accomplished a skill, require it regularly across the curriculum in various subjects.

Note:

For the table above, you may have noticed that I draw a distinction between full-length narrations and 3-paragraph papers. The difference is in the structure of the paper.

The 3-paragraph papers should be organized around a 3-part outline: an introduction, a middle, and an ending. This could be steps in a process, 3 events in history, or a story. Basically, it is an exercise in structure and leads to the 5-paragraph paper.

A written narration is a straight forward retelling from the student's memory of the reading selection. Usually, the student puts pen to paper and writes with no outlining or mapping to organize the information. Full-length narrations help students to remember details and become comfortable writing longer papers. They also free the student from worrying about how the paper is to be structured. And they give students an opportunity to experiment with writing and develop their own personal style. If a student enjoys the subject, narrations present the student the opportunity to develop a love for writing.

6-Year Writing Plan					
Grade	Foundational Writing Skills			Cross Curriculum Writing (Weekly)	End of Year Writing Goals
	Narration	Copywork (Doubles as handwriting practice)	Dictation		
First					
Second					
Third					
Fourth					
Fifth					
Sixth					

A Charlotte Mason Writing Curriculum

Write from History

Initially, I wrote the Write from History series to save me time and to ensure that I was prepared so that my children's writing would not suffer because of my lack of organization. While it wasn't difficult to come up with different passages for them daily, I found that it wasn't happening consistently. To fix this problem, I purchased copywork programs from homeschooling publishers. But this presented me with another problem. While I was now prepared with excellent copywork selections, the copywork wasn't tied in with our narration and dictation. Also, the selections were not always relevant to our studies. Almost nothing was coordinated. Ideally, I wanted our narration, copywork, and dictation to be coordinated and to tie in with our literature and our history studies. With those goals in mind, the Write from History series was created.

(To elaborate on the Write from History series, *Write from Ancient History* is used to explain how all level 1 programs will work.)

Immediately following are more details on the level 1 books and sample pages from *Write from Ancient History Level 1* (see page 21). The reading selection is a narrative from *Fifty Famous People* by James Baldwin.

Write from Ancient History Level 1

(See sample pages 21-26)

Write from Ancient History teaches writing the Charlotte Mason way for grades first through third. It is divided into four chapters: short stories, fables from Aesop, poetry, and cultural tales. For Chapter I, short stories that give insight into people, places, and events during ancient times have been selected. Chapter II contains fables attributed to Aesop. Chapter III contains poetry from and about ancient times. Chapter IV contains folk tales from various cultures.

In all four chapters, the reading selection is followed by two passages which serve as writing models for the student. The first model has lines immediately below each word and the second model has lines further down the paper. There are more than 55 reading selections included in *Write from Ancient History, Level 1* and two writing models for each selection.

To coordinate *Write from Ancient History* with your history topics, refer to the Table of Contents, which also serves as a timeline. Use the timeline provided to determine which selection would be the best fit for that week's history lesson. (*Write from Ancient History* can be used with any history program.)

Reading Levels

Chapters I and II contain chapters taken from living books that are historically relevant to ancient times. These selections may be above the reading ability of some first and second graders. Chapter III contains poetry that may be above the reading level of many first, second, and third graders. If necessary, read the poetry selections to your student. If you would like to stretch your student, ask him to read the selections back to you. These reading selections offer great opportunity to cover new vocabulary as well as new ideas.

Narrations:

Write from Ancient History consists of self-contained reading selections—short historical narratives, fables, and cultural tales—for children to read or listen to. These selections were taken from books such as: *Fifty Famous Stories Retold* by James Baldwin, *More Jataka Tales* by Ellen C. Babbitt, *The Aesop for Children* by Aesop and Milo Winter, and many others.

When younger children narrate, the parent writes down the narration on the page labeled written summation. As children are able (between 8 and 10), they transition to writing these narrations themselves. If children have difficulty transitioning to writing their own narrations, the teacher needs to work with the student on putting the narrations on paper, by helping him select the words and remind him of his word choice as he writes his narration.

Oral narrations are to be continued as long as the student is unable to write his narrations for himself.

Copywork:

There are two copywork models for each reading selection. The first has lines immediately beneath the word (see page 25). The second is slightly more advanced; the model is at the top of the paper and the lines are below (see page 26).

The copywork models are approximately 2 sentences in length; some are 3 shorter sentences or 1 longer one. I tried to select passages that are easy to accommodate both first and second graders. The beginning writer should copy only one sentence or one independent phrase. To do this, parents simply break the sentence at the conjunction and cross out the remaining. The older student would copy all.

Studied Dictation:

(Many students won't be ready for dictation at this level. If your child masters copywork, feel free to introduce dictation.)

The goal in dictation is to teach your child to write correctly and from memory the sentences or clauses he has just heard. Let the student study the dictation for a few minutes. Write down any unknown words on a board that are more difficult for him. Then erase the board and read each passage only once. From this one reading, he should write; however, if he makes a mistake, you may want to cover the mistake instantly so that the student will not internalize the error.

If you would like to introduce your second or third grader to dictation, feel free to reduce the model to an appropriate length for your student. For the child who has never done dictation, this may be a sentence of five words or so. (*There is no magic number. You simply meet the student where he is and move forward, always challenging, but never overwhelming.*) If necessary, read the passage as many times as necessary. Work down to one reading per sentence or main clause. This is an advanced skill and may require time to achieve. Be patient, but consistent. (If needed, allow your student to repeat the model back to you before he writes. Some students may need this reinforcement; others may not.)

The Young Cupbearer

c. 590 BC — c. 529 BC Cyrus the Great
from Fifty Famous People
by James Baldwin

Long, long ago, there lived in Persia a little prince whose name was Cyrus.

He was not petted and spoiled like many other princes. Although his father was a king, Cyrus was brought up like the son of a common man.

He knew how to work with his hands. He ate only the plainest food. He slept on a hard bed. He learned to endure hunger and cold.

When Cyrus was twelve years old he went with his mother to Media to visit his grandfather. His grandfather, whose name was Astyages, was king of Media. And he was very rich and powerful.

Cyrus was so tall and strong and handsome that his grandfather was very proud of him. He wished the lad to stay with him in Media. He therefore gave him many beautiful gifts and everything that could please a prince. One day King Astyages planned to make a great feast for the lad. The tables were to be laden with all kinds of food. There was to be music and dancing; and Cyrus was to invite as many guests as he chose. The hour for the feast came. Everything was ready. The servants were there, dressed in fine uniforms. The musicians and dancers were in their places. But no guests came.

"How is this, my dear boy?" asked the king. "The feast is ready, but no one has come to partake of it."

"That is because I have not invited any one," said Cyrus. "In Persia we do not have such feasts. If any one is hungry, he eats some bread and meat, with perhaps a few cresses, and that is the end of it. We never go to all this trouble and expense of making a fine dinner in order that our friends may eat what is not good for them."

King Astyages did not know whether to be pleased or displeased.

Date for
timeline

Reading levels for
Chapters 1, 2, and 4 are
between 1st and 3rd
grade.

"Well," said he, "all these rich foods that were prepared for the feast are yours. What will you do with them?"

"I think I will give them to our friends," said Cyrus.

So he gave one portion to the king's officer who had taught him to ride. Another portion he gave to an old servant who waited upon his grandfather. And the rest he divided among the young women who took care of his mother.

The king's cupbearer, Sarcas, was very much offended because he was not given a share of the feast. The king also wondered why this man, who was his favorite, should be so slighted.

"Why didn't you give something to Sarcas?" he asked.

"Well, truly," said Cyrus, "I do not like him. He is proud and overbearing. He thinks that he makes a fine figure when he waits on you."

"And so he does," said the king. "He is very skillful as a cupbearer."

"That may be so," answered Cyrus, "but if you will let me be your cupbearer tomorrow, I think I can serve you quite as well."

King Astyages smiled. He saw that Cyrus had a will of his own, and this pleased him very much.

"I shall be glad to see what you can do," he said. "Tomorrow, you shall be the king's cupbearer."

You would hardly have known the young prince when the time came for him to appear before his grandfather. He was dressed in the rich uniform of the cupbearer, and he came forward with much dignity and grace.

He carried a white napkin upon his arm, and held the cup of wine very daintily with three of his fingers.

His manners were perfect. Sarcas himself could not have served the king half so well.

"Bravo! Bravo!" cried his mother, her eyes sparkling with pride.

"You have done well" said his grandfather. "But you neglected one important thing. It is the rule and custom of the cupbearer to pour out a little of the wine and taste it before handing the cup to me. This you forgot to do."

"Indeed, grandfather, I did not forget it," answered Cyrus.

"Then why didn't you do it?" asked his mother.

"Because I believed there was poison in the wine."

"Poison, my boy!" cried King Astyages, much alarmed. "Poison! Poison!"

"Yes, grandfather, poison. For the other day, when you sat at dinner with your officers, I noticed that the wine made you act queerly. After the guests had drunk quite a little of it, they began to talk foolishly and sing loudly; and some of them went to sleep. And you, grandfather, were as bad as the rest. You forgot that you were king. You forgot all your good manners. You tried to dance and fell upon the floor. I am afraid to drink anything that makes men act in that way."

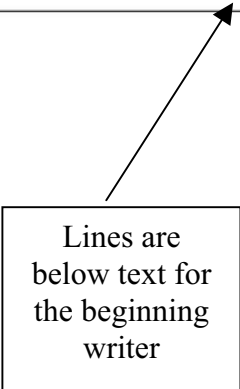
"Didn't you ever see your father behave so?" asked the king.

"No, never," said Cyrus. "He does not drink merely to be drinking. He drinks to quench his thirst, and that is all."

When Cyrus became a man, he succeeded his father as king of Persia; he also succeeded his grandfather Astyages as king of Media. He was a very wise and powerful ruler, and he made his country the greatest of any that was then known. In history he is commonly called Cyrus the Great.

Model Practice 1 (adapted from the original)

He knew how to work
with his hands. He ate only
the plainest food. And he
slept on a hard bed.



Lines are
below text for
the beginning
writer

King Astyages smiled. He saw that Cyrus had a will of his own, and this pleased him very much.

Model Practice 2

Handwriting practice lines consisting of a solid top line, a dashed midline, and a solid bottom line. There are 10 sets of these lines available for writing.

More advanced copywork requiring the student to remember the model

Model Practice 3

Handwriting practice lines consisting of a solid top line, a dashed midline, and a solid bottom line. There are 10 sets of these lines available for writing.

Model Practice 3 area may be used for dictation. For the student new to dictation, use the previous day's copywork selection for dictation. Have the student study it first, and then write.

For older students, use the model above to study the selection, and then cover it as you dictate the model.

A list of all of the copywork models is located in the Appendix for the teacher to remove and use.

Write from Ancient History Level 2

(See sample pages 30-39)

Immediately following are sample pages from *Write from Ancient History, Level 2*. One is a reading selection from *The Story of the Greeks* by H. A. Guerber (page 30), and the other is a primary source document—an excerpt of The Apology by Xenophon (an historian and contemporary of Socrates) on the trial of Socrates (page 35).

Write from Ancient History, Level 2 teaches writing the Charlotte Mason way for students in third through fifth grade. (My older child in the sixth grade will be using the books next year, and several parents have used them with older students.) It is divided into four chapters: short stories, text excerpts from primary source documents, poetry, and cultural tales. For Chapter I, short stories that give insight into people, places, and events during ancient times have been selected. Chapter II contains excerpts from primary source documents including, but not limited to, ancient codes, biblical passages, and ancient philosophy. Chapter III contains poetry from and about ancient times. Chapter IV contains cultural tales.

In all four chapters, the reading selection is followed by a model, which is used for copywork. Additional models for dictation are provided in the Appendix. There are more than 60 selections included in *Write from Ancient History, Level 2, with two models for each selection—one for copywork and one for dictation*.

To coordinate *Write from Ancient History* with your history topics, refer to the Table of Contents, which also serves as a timeline. Use the timeline provided to determine which selection would be the best fit for that week’s history lesson. Historical narratives will primarily come from Chapters I and IV. Feel free to move around the book.

In the Appendix you will find the two models for each reading selection. The first model is the same as the copywork model that follows the reading selection. The second model, which is in italics, is also from the reading selection. It has been added for dictation use and is in the Appendix only.

Because *Write from Ancient History* was written for grades 3–5, some models will be too long for some students. Simply reduce any of the models by drawing a line through the unneeded portion. Sometimes you will have to break the model in the middle of a sentence. In that case, stop at a semi-colon (;) or coordinating conjunction (“, **and**”, “, **or**”, “, **but**”, “, **nor**”, “, **for**”, “, **so**”, “, **yet**”) to make the selection shorter. Semi-colons and coordinating conjunctions are both used to separate main clauses—those with a subject and a predicate. If you must break the model into a shorter sentence, modify the new selection by adding a period at the end and ensure that you have a grammatically correct model. Explain to your student the use of semi-colons and coordinating conjunctions and why the change is being made. This is an excellent opportunity to reinforce and explain the grammar rules involved.

Reading Levels

Chapters I and IV contain chapters taken from living books that are historically relevant to ancient times or cultures. These selections are between a 4th and 6th grade reading level. Chapter II contains excerpts from primary source documents that are well above the reading level of most students in grades 3-5. When covering these selections, read them to your student. Chapter III contains poetry that will be above the reading level of some students. If necessary, read the poetry selections to your student, as well. If you would like to stretch your student, ask him to read the selections back to you. These reading selections offer great opportunity to cover new vocabulary as well as new ideas.

Narrations:

Write from Ancient History, Level 2 consists of self-contained reading selections of historical value for narrating. Students continue to narrate orally as long as they are having difficulty transitioning to written narrations. (The oral narrations help to impress the information upon their memories, allowing them to preview what they will write before putting pen to paper.) When they are ready, they write full-length narrations or written summations.

Level 2 books contain short historical narratives, fables, and cultural tales for children to read. These selections were taken from books such as: *The Wonder Book of Bible Stories* by Logan Marshall, *The Story of the Greeks* and *The Story of the Romans* by H. A. Guerber, *Tales of Wonder Every Child Should Know* edited by Kate Douglas Wiggin and Nora Archibald Smith, and many others.

Copywork:

There is one copywork model for each reading selection. In the Appendix, there is an additional dictation selection for each story.

The copywork models are approximately 1 paragraph in length. For some 3rd graders this will be a challenge. If it is too much, break the model, and cross out the remainder. In the event that the model is one super long sentence, as was common during early modern times, break the model at a semi-colon or conjunction. The more experienced writer would copy all.

Studied Dictation:

Let the student study the dictation for a few minutes. (I write our dictation model on the whiteboard.) Have him write unfamiliar words in his spelling notebook, if he has one. Erase the board and read each sentence or independent clause only once. From this one reading, he should write; however, if he makes a mistake, you may want to cover the mistake instantly so that the student will not internalize the error.

If your student is transitioning to dictation, feel free to reduce the model to an appropriate length for your student. You simply meet the student where he is and move forward, always challenging, but never overwhelming. If necessary, read the passage as many

times as necessary. Work down to one reading per sentence or main clause. This is an advanced skill and may require time to achieve. Be patient, but consistent. (If needed, allow your student to repeat the model back to you before he writes. Some students may need this reinforcement; others may not.)

Immediately following are sample pages from *Write from Ancient History, Level 2*.

Accusation of Socrates

from The Story of the Greeks

by H. A. Guerber

c. 469 BC–399 BC

Socrates, as you know, was one of the best and gentlest of men, yet he had many enemies. These were principally the people who were jealous of him and of his renown for great wisdom; for his reputation was so well established that the oracle at Delphi, when consulted, replied that the most learned man in Greece was Socrates.

Although Socrates was so wise and good and gentle, he was not at all conceited and showed his wisdom by never pretending to know what he did not know, and by his readiness to learn anything new, provided one could prove it to be true.

Among the noted Athenians of this time was Aristophanes, a writer of comedies or funny plays. He was so witty that his comedies are still admired almost as much as when they were played in the Theater of Dionysus for the amusement of the people.

Like most funny men, Aristophanes liked to turn everything into ridicule. He had often seen Socrates and Alcibiades walking through the streets of Athens and was greatly amused at the contrast they presented.

Now, Aristophanes, with all his cleverness, was not always just; and while his ridicule sometimes did good, at other times it did a great deal of harm. He soon learned to dislike Alcibiades; but he saw how dearly the people loved the young man and fancied that his faults must be owing to the bad advice of his teacher. Such was not the case, for Socrates had tried to bring out all the good in his pupil. Alcibiades' pride, insolence, and treachery were rather the result of the constant flattery to which he had been exposed on the part of those who claimed to be his friends.

Aristophanes disliked Alcibiades so much that he soon wrote a comedy called "The Clouds" in which he made fun of him. Of course, he did not call the people in the play by their real names; but the hero was a good-for-nothing young man, who, advised by his teacher, bought fast horses, ran his father into debt, cheated everybody, and treated even the gods with disrespect.

As the actors who took part in this comedy dressed and acted as nearly as possible like Alcibiades and Socrates, you can imagine that the play, which was very comical and clever, made the Athenians roar with laughter.

Everybody talked about it, repeated the best jokes, and went again and again to see and laugh over it. We are told that Socrates went there himself one day; and when asked why he had come, he quietly said, "I came to find out whether, among all the faults of which I am accused, there may not be some that I can correct."

You see, the philosopher knew that it was never too late to mend and fully intended to be as perfect as possible. He knew, of course, that he could not straighten his crooked nose or make his face good-looking, but he hoped to find some way of improving his character.

"The Clouds" amused the Athenians for about twenty years; and when Alcibiades turned traitor, and caused the ruin of his country, the people still went to see it. In their anger against Alcibiades, they began to think that perhaps Aristophanes was right, and that the youth they had once loved so dearly would never have turned out so badly had he not been influenced for evil.

Date for
timeline.

As the teacher in the play was blamed for all the wrongdoing of his pupil, so Socrates was now accused by the Athenians of ruining Alcibiades. Little by little the philosopher's enemies became so bold that they finally made up their minds to get rid of him. As he was quite innocent and as there was no other excuse for dragging him before the Tribunal, they finally charged him with giving bad advice to young men and speaking ill of the gods.

Socrates was one of the best and gentlest of men, yet he had many enemies. These were principally the people who were jealous of him and of his renown for great wisdom; for his reputation was so well established that the oracle at Delphi, when consulted, replied that the most learned man in Greece was Socrates.

Model Practice 1 (adapted form the original)

Feel free to shorten the copywork model for younger students. Break the model after **wisdom** and explain to your student that this can be done because a semi-colon connects two complete sentences or independent clauses. It is just another correct way to write the model.

Model Practice 2

Model Practice 2 area is for dictation. The models for dictation are located in the Appendix.

Model Practice 3

Pick a sentence from your child's written summation or from the models provided and have him write the model sentence several different ways. He is to begin the sentence by asking: who, what, when, where, why, and how.

An excerpt from a primary source document

For selections as these, read them to your student. Some older students may be able to read the selection themselves.

It isn't necessary for students to completely understand such complicated material. Over time, the exposure to these primary source writings will make the material less intimidating for students when they are older and are required to work with primary source documents.

The Apology (excerpt)

by Xenophon
c. 431 BC- c. 350 BC
translation by H. G. Dakyns

"I admit it," Socrates replied, "in the case of education; and with regard to health a man prefers to study; and with regard to health a man prefers to assemble the citizens of Athens, I presume, for wisdom rather than their own relations. And is it not your fathers and brothers, and, bless me! your own, believe to be the wisest authorities on military matters?"

"No doubt, Socrates," replied Meletus, "because it is expedient and customary so to do."

"Well then," rejoined Socrates, "does it not strike even you, Meletus, as wonderful when in all ordinary concerns the best people should obtain, I do not say only an equal share, but an exclusive preference; but in my case, simply because I am selected by certain people as an adept in respect of the greatest treasure men possess—education, I am on that account to be prosecuted by you, sir, on the capital charge?"

Much more than this, it stands to reason, was urged, whether by himself or by the friends who advocated his cause. But my object has not been to mention everything that arose out of the suit. It suffices me to have shown on the one hand that Socrates, beyond everything, desired not to display impiety to heaven, and injustice to men; and on the other, that escape from death was not a thing, in his opinion, to be clamoured for importunately—on the contrary, he believed that the time was already come for him to die. That such was the conclusion to which he had come was made still more evident later when the case had been decided against him. In the first place, when called upon to suggest a counter-penalty, he would neither do so himself nor suffer his friends to do so for him, but went so far as to say that to propose a counter-penalty was like a confession of guilt. And afterwards, when his companions wished to steal him out of prison, he would not follow their lead, but would seem to have treated the idea as a jest, by asking "whether they happened to know of some place outside Attica where death was forbidden to set foot?"

When the trial drew to an end, we are told, the master said: "Sirs, those who instructed the witnesses that they ought to perjure themselves and bear false witness against me, alike with those who listened to their instruction, must be conscious to themselves of a deep impiety and injustice. But for myself, what reason have I at the present time to hold my head less high than I did before sentence was passed against me, if I have not been convicted of having done any of those things whereof my accusers accused me? It has not been proved against me that I have sacrificed to novel divinities in place of Zeus and Hera and the gods who form their company. I have not taken oath by any other gods, nor named their name.

"And then the young—how could I corrupt them by habituating them to manliness and frugality? since not even my accusers themselves allege against me that I have committed any of those deeds of which death is the penalty, such as robbery of temples, breaking into houses, selling freemen into

slavery, or betrayal of the state; so that I must still ask myself in wonderment how it has been proved to you that I have done a deed worthy of death. Nor yet again because I die innocently is that a reason why I should lower my crest, for that is a blot not upon me but upon those who condemned me.

“For me, I find a certain consolation in the case of Palamedes, whose end was not unlike my own; who still even to-day furnishes a far nobler theme of song than Odysseus who unjustly slew him; and I know that testimony will be borne to me also by time future and time past that I never wronged another at any time or ever made a worse man of him, but ever tried to benefit those who practiced discussion with me, teaching them gratuitously every good thing in my power.”

And when he perceived those who followed by his side in tears, “What is this?” he asked. “Why do you weep now? Do you not know that for many a long day, ever since I was born, sentence of death was passed upon me by nature? If so be I perish prematurely while the tide of life’s blessings flows free and fast, certainly I and my well-wishers should feel pained; but if it be that I am bringing my life to a close on the eve of troubles, for my part I think you ought all of you to take heart of grace and rejoice in my good fortune.”

Now there was a certain Apollodorus, who was an enthusiastic lover of the master, but for the rest a simple-minded man. He exclaimed very innocently, “But the hardest thing of all to bear, Socrates, is to see you put to death unjustly.”

Whereupon Socrates, it is said, gently stroked the young man’s head: “Would you have been better pleased, my dear one, to see me put to death for some just reason rather than unjustly?” and as he spoke he smiled tenderly.

It is also said that, seeing Anytus pass by, Socrates remarked: “How proudly the great man steps; he thinks, no doubt, he has performed some great and noble deed in putting me to death, and all because, seeing him deemed worthy of the highest honours of the state, I told him it ill became him to bring up his son in a tan-yard. What a scamp the fellow is! he appears not to know that of us two whichever has achieved what is best and noblest for all future time is the real victor in this suit. Well! well!” he added, “Homer has ascribed to some at the point of death a power of forecasting things to be, and I too am minded to utter a prophecy. Once, for a brief space, I associated with the son of Anytus, and he seemed to me not lacking in strength of soul; and what I say is, he will not adhere long to the slavish employment which his father has prepared for him, but, in the absence of any earnest friend and guardian, he is like to be led into some base passion and go to great lengths in depravity.”

The prophecy proved true. The young man fell a victim to the pleasures of wine; night and day he never ceased drinking, and at last became a mere good-for-nothing, worthless alike to his city, his friends, and himself. As to Anytus, even though the grave has closed upon him, his evil reputation still survives him, due alike to his son’s base bringing-up and his own want of human feeling.

Socrates did, it is true, by his self-laudation draw down upon him the jealousy of the court and caused his judges all the more to record their votes against him. Yet even so I look upon the lot of destiny which he obtained as providential, chancing as he did upon the easiest amidst the many shapes of death, and escaping as he did the one grievous portion of existence. And what a glorious chance,

moreover, he had to display the full strength of his soul, for when once he had decided that death was better for him than life, just as in the old days he had never harshly opposed himself to the good things of life morosely, so even in face of death he showed no touch of weakness, but with gaiety welcomed death's embrace, and discharged life's debt.

Since Write from History has helped me so much, I have decided to make these books available to the homeschooling community. The goal of the Write from History books is to provide parents with top quality pre-selected models for narration, copywork, and dictation that are relevant to the student's study of history.

I have attempted to design the books as simply as possible, so that the program remains flexible to use.

If you should have any questions about Write from History, please contact me via the Write From History website or at my email address below—

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