



Skills for
LANGUAGE
Arts

Lessons in
Grammar &
Communication

Junior High

Student
James P. Stobaugh

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Everything is from God, who . . . gave us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18).



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Using Your Student Textbook

How this course has been developed:

1. **Chapters:** This course has 34 chapters (representing 34 weeks of study).
2. **Lessons:** Each chapter has five instructive lessons, taking approximately 45 to 60 minutes each, with review questions each Friday.
3. **Grading:** Depending on the grading option chosen, the parent/educator will grade the daily concept builders, prayer journal, and the weekly reviews, as well as the novella at the end of the course.
4. **Course credit:** If a student has satisfactorily completed all assignments for this course, it is equivalent to one credit of writing and one credit of literature.

Throughout this course, you will find the following:

1. **Chapter learning objectives:** Always read the “First Thoughts” and “Chapter Learning Objectives” to comprehend the scope of the material to be covered in a particular week.
2. **Concept builders:** Students should complete a daily concept builder each day. These activities take 15 minutes or less and emphasize a particular concept that is vital to that particular chapter topic. These will relate to a subject covered in the chapter, though not necessarily in that day’s lesson. Answers are available in the teacher guide.
3. **Weekly chapter review and tests:** Students will answer review questions at the end of each week, there is a weekly test assignment every Friday.
4. **Daily prayer journal:** Students are encouraged to write in a prayer journal every day. A parent/educator may include this in the overall grade. If so, it is encouraged that the grade be based on participation rather than on the content, since this is a deeply personal expression of a student’s walk with God.
5. **Novella:** Students will correct and rewrite their novella for their final grade.
6. **Reading:** Students will read excerpts from approximately one book every two weeks. Families may choose to read the entire book, a condensed version of the classic, or summaries of these stories online.

What you will need each day:

1. A notepad or computer for your writing assignments.
2. A pen or pencil for writing notes.
3. A prayer journal so you can keep a record of your prayers and devotions.

Preface

This course will teach you how to read well. Good readers read with a pen. One does not read unless one is marking up the text. Competent readers ask pertinent questions and predict as they read. For instance when they read *The Yearling*, they will predict the ending. This skill will enhance comprehension. Furthermore, good readers look for the author's purpose, the intended audience, the development and support of the main idea, and the structure/coherence of the work. Finally, good readers read a lot.

This course will teach you how to write well. Great writers are always great readers. Writing is never easy. It is very difficult to do well. It takes planning, courage, and energy. I know this to be true—writing is my vocation. I am occasionally inspired when I write, and inspiration does make writing more pleasant, but it does not make it any easier to do. Writing is, and will always be, difficult for you to do well.

This book will teach you how to write. It will show you how to write with competency and inspiration. It will show you how to connect with your audience. Writing is not about making friends with your audience. Its main purpose is to communicate. Most of the writing you will be doing will be literary analysis. Literary analysis is literary criticism. They are the same.

What is literary criticism? Literary criticism is talking and writing about literature. Any literature, at any age. In that sense, literary analysis is a critical discussion of literature. To be “critical” is not necessarily to be “negative.” It is to be intentional in one's evaluation of literature. Indeed, “evaluation” is the highest form of thoughtful analysis.

When children growing up read Margaret Wise Brown's *Runaway Bunny* and ask, “Do I like this book?” and “Why?” they are, in effect, analyzing the literary piece. They are doing literary criticism. As they get more adept, students ask, “Who are the central characters? What conflict do they face? Where is the climax? Is there a theme?” But further sophistication and advanced metacognition in no way diminishes the intentional, informed opinions of the most unsophisticated readers.

You will learn how to do all these things. Literary critics, no matter what their age, use a special “language” to talk about literature. For example, in *The Runaway Bunny* the protagonist (the main character), a little runaway bunny, is pursued by his loving mother, a mother bunny, an important foil (a character who develops the main character). The protagonist experiences several layers of internal conflict as he tries to escape his mother. Along the way, the author, Margaret Wise Brown, uses several setting changes to develop her characters. And so forth. Now readers have a way to discuss this literary work.

As you read great literature, you will find they share similar themes and plot patterns. For instance, as the mother bunny pursues her runaway, likewise God pursues Jonah (Book of Jonah). Different characters. Similar theme. Similar plot.

Finally, young people, learning to read and to write well is critical to the future. Literary analysis or criticism is the first cousin of Christian apologetics. Christian apologetics is the considered defense of Christian dogma, Scripture, and worldview. Learning to evaluate literature, literary analysis, prepares readers to be Christian apologists. After all, it is no coincidence that the greatest apologists are not theologians: they are English teachers! C. S. Lewis did not teach systematic theology: he taught literature.

Besides, literary analysis helps readers to evaluate and to reclaim the “metaphor.” What I mean by metaphor is “a comparison between something completely different from something else.” In literature, a metaphor enables readers to understand very difficult things by illustrating those things with other simple things more familiar to the audience.

Christians desperately need to reclaim the metaphor! Again, a metaphor is a literary concept where the author compares a dissimilar thing to a similar thing so that readers will grasp the meaning and importance of the dissimilar thing. Jesus calls himself the “Good Shepherd.” If readers and listeners grasp the importance and meaning of “Good Shepherd,” they will be on the way to understanding the role of Jesus Christ. When Jesus spoke these metaphors, he knew that he was using images and concepts that were familiar to his agrarian, pastoral audience.

What we Christians need to do is to take age-old Christian dogmas of “faith,” “love,” “forgiveness,” and especially “hope” and find contemporary metaphors to make these concepts come alive in our post-Christian, sorry world.

Fundamentally, literary criticism, then, will help readers reclaim the metaphor in their psyche, language, and writing. This will presage laudable outcomes in the kingdom of God. My goodness, it will presage laudable outcomes in the kingdom of man!

Therefore, amid so many competing media options, you must learn to analyze, to evaluate, to appreciate great literature. The propagation of the gospel will not be enhanced by how quickly we can appreciate and text messages to one another; however, it will be enhanced by how well we grasp the critical nuances of Bible stories. We cannot suppose that our unsaved world will grasp concepts like “love” and “faith” unless we have words, rhetoric, to tell them what these things are. If we learn how to do literary analysis well, we will be better able to create and to share vital truths to future generations.

Reading 1

“Elijah Confronts the Baals”

Chapter 1

First Thoughts

Communication is a very important part of every Christian’s life. We need to do it well. We should write well, speak well, and read well. This first chapter introduces all these components.

Chapter Learning Objectives

In chapter 1 we will . . .

1. Understand and use nouns properly in sentences.
2. Compare spoken language to written language.
3. Implement reading strategies that will help you read better.
4. Analyze the characters in “Elijah Confronts the Baals.”
5. Begin writing a novella.
6. List the characters in your novella.

Look Ahead for Friday

- Turn in all assignments.
- List and describe the characters in your novella.

Lesson 1

Grammar Review: Nouns

A **noun** is the name of a person, place, or thing. We are persons, we live in a place, and our television is a thing. The name of anything that exists, whether alive or not, is a noun. A noun is something we can see, hear, feel, taste, smell, or think of. Any word that will make sense with *the* before it, is a noun.

Nouns can even signify the absence of something: *nothing*, *absence*, and *emptiness* are all nouns.

Nouns are sometimes used as verbs, and verbs as nouns, according to their meaning. A verb that is used as a noun is called a **gerund**. Nouns are also sometimes used as adjectives, and adjectives as nouns.

There are two kinds of nouns: common and proper.

A **common noun** is the name of a sort or species of things that are not specific like day, night, human, or book.

A **proper noun** is the name of a specific person, place, or thing. Proper nouns begin with a capital letter like: James or the Grand Canyon.

A **collective noun** signifies a multitude, or many of the same kind. An *army*, for instance, is a collective noun.

In science class, you will notice that the genus, species, or variety of beings or things, are always common, like tree, the genus: pecan, walnut, or elm. The scientific name of a tree, say, pecan tree, *Carya illinoensis*, is capitalized. The word *earth*, when it signifies a type or kind, is a common noun; but when it names the planet Earth, it is a proper noun.

God is, of course, a proper noun, but it is a common noun when it is used as a pagan god, such as a false god.

Even proper nouns used with a false or pagan god are common nouns. For instance, “Zeus (proper noun) was considered a very powerful god (common noun).” But “The God of Israel is a good God.”

Nouns have three **genders**: the masculine, the feminine, and the neuter.

The masculine gender denotes males; a man, a boy.

The feminine gender denotes females; a woman, a girl, a lady.

The neuter gender denotes things without sex; a smile, a shadow.

Person is a property of the noun and pronoun which affects the verb.

The first person denotes the speaker.

The second person denotes the person or thing spoken to: Rise, oh sun!

The third person denotes the person or thing spoken of: The sun rises!

Technically, nouns only have two persons — the second and the third. When a man speaks, the pronouns *I* or *we* are always used; therefore, nouns can never be in the first person.

How to Write a Simple Essay

An essay is a written presentation about a topic, exposition, or argument., It is also a written composition — it is not a speech. It is more than a paragraph and it is less than a dissertation. Every written composition, every essay, has a beginning, a middle, and an ending. We call these *introduction*, *body*, and *conclusion*. Though warm-ups are not graded, you should write them with the same energy and carefulness that you devote to all your assignments.

So what is an introduction?

The introduction is the broad beginning of the essay that asks three important questions:

1. What is this?
2. Why am I reading it?
3. What argument/position do you want me to accept?

You should ask these questions by doing the following:

1. Set the context — provide general information about the main idea, explaining the situation so the parent/teacher can make sense of the topic and the claims you make and support. Restate the question.
2. State why the main idea is important — tell the parent/teacher why he/she should care and keep reading. Your goal is to create a compelling, clear, and convincing essay the parent/teacher will want to read and act upon.
3. State your thesis/claim — compose a sentence or two stating the position you will support with *logos* (sound reasoning: induction, deduction), *pathos* (balanced, emotional appeal), and *ethos* (author credibility).

In summary, all information discussed in the essay is presented in the introduction. No new arguments may be added after the introduction is created. Don't surprise your reader. Presume nothing. Explain everything.

Here is a simple introduction of an essay about the historical validity of *The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere* (italicize rather than quotes) JK by William Wordsworth Longfellow:

The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere is perhaps the best well-known account of the ride of Paul Revere. He rode throughout the Boston countryside to warn the minutemen of the coming attack of the British regulars. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's view of this historical event is vivid and well detailed.

This is a simple yet effective *introduction*. The student states a known fact that "*The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere* is perhaps the best well-known account of the ride . . ." — without exaggerating its importance or making vague claims. He did not say, for instance, *The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere* is the greatest poem ever written.

More important, in the introduction he states clearly

what the purpose of this essay is: "Henry Longfellow's view of this historical event is vivid and well detailed." He does not equivocate. He states succinctly and briefly why he is writing this essay. This is called the *thesis*.

Next, he moves into the most important part of his essay: the *body*. The body of an essay is the core of the essay. It is where the argument is developed and the evidence is provided.

The author writes how Paul Revere instructed his friend at the Church. He requested that two lights be hung in the Church tower if the British were coming by sea. One light if the British were coming by land. Then he carefully rowed across the river to the Charleston Shore. He had to row past the mighty Somerset warship. Paul carefully muffled his oars to avoid attracting any attention to the water's surface. After reaching the Charleston Shore, Revere saw two lights. By this, he knew that the British were coming by sea. Eager to ride, Paul jumped on his horse and rode off into the night. As he was riding, he was stopped by some British troops on patrol. He escaped and effectively warned the minutemen of the attack on Concord. The minutemen jumped from their beds and raced to Concord. Because of Revere's ride, the attack on Concord was stopped.

The three elements of a good *body* include paragraphs that have:

1. A topic sentence that tells the parent/teacher what you will be arguing in the paragraph.
2. Specific evidence and analysis that supports your thesis and provides more detail than your topic sentence.
3. A brief wrap-up sentence that tells the reader how and why this information supports the paper's thesis.

The brief wrap-up is also known as the *warrant*. The warrant is important to your argument because it connects your reasoning and support to your thesis. It also shows that the information in the paragraph is related to your thesis and helps defend it. Incidentally, the author of this essay should have provided more textual evidence.

Finally, the student ends with a *summary/conclusion*.

This informative poem is clearly written and carefully explains the events in Revere's ride. When one reads the poem, he can feel the suspense in the story as a mood of high uncertainty sets in. Despite the poem

being somewhat short, it deeply describes how Revere warned the minutemen of the first battle of the Revolutionary War.

In a general way, your *conclusion* will:

- restate your topic and why it is important
- restate your thesis/claim

Remember that once you accomplish these three tasks — an introduction, body, and conclusion — the essay is complete. Do not bring in new points after the conclusion has been completed.

Daily Assignment

- Warm-up: Pretend that you are King Ahab’s advisor. What would you say? Use at least two proper nouns, two common nouns, and two collective nouns. (Read 1 Kings 18 if you need a refresher of the account.)
- Students will complete Concept Builder 1-A.
- Prayer journal: students are encouraged to write in their prayer journal every day.
- Finish the next book you have been assigned.
- Students should systematically review their vocabulary words daily.

CONCEPT BUILDER 1-A

Nouns

Label each noun according to its type.

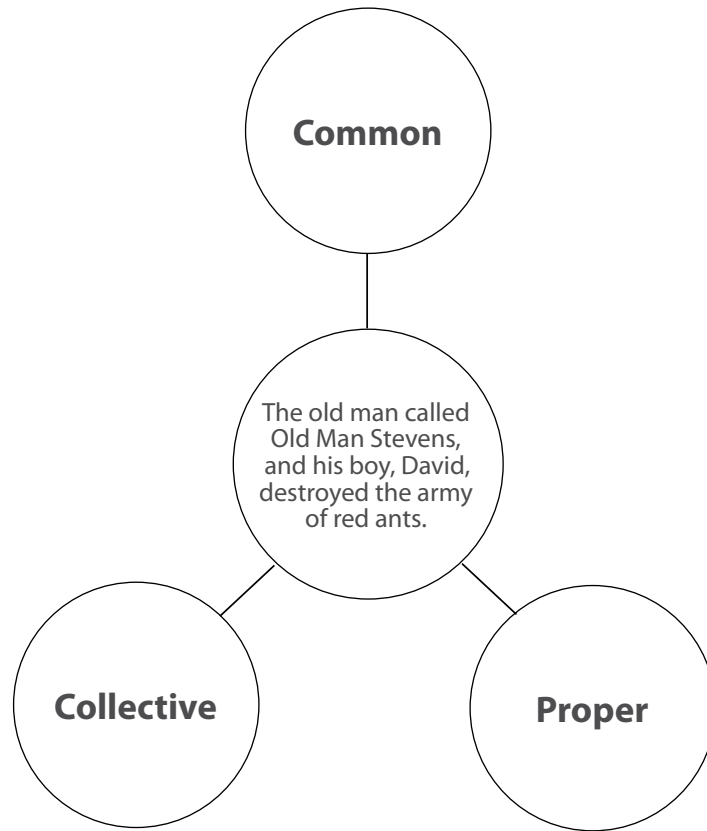
Common Nouns

region
Homo Sapien
battalion
white oak
Quercus Alba
faith
morning
Seattle
northeast

Collective Nouns

Proper Nouns

Identify examples of common, proper, and collective nouns in the sentence below.



Writing Skills: Spoken Language vs. Word Language

We write to communicate. We speak to communicate. We communicate mostly in language — but not entirely.

The truth is, we often speak much differently than we write. For instance, who answers the question, “Who are you?” with “I am he”? That is technically the correct way to write the answer but most of us would say,

“I am me.” “I am me” may sound correct when we are speaking, but it is not the correct way to write it. When the subject “I” is followed by a linking verb “am,” it requires the nominative case pronoun “he.” Speaking, however, often gives the communicator certain privileges that the writer doesn’t have.

There are other advantages that speaking offers a communicator. The speaker can utilize facial expressions

and tone of voice. Speakers can wiggle their noses or laugh when they speak. This lets the listeners know that the speaker is joking. For instance, if your mom said, with a frown, “Go to bed!” you know that she is not happy. If, however, she is smiling, or even laughing, when she says “Go to bed!” the words have an entirely different meaning.

How do we communicate feelings and thoughts through the written word? That is what you will learn this year.

Daily Assignment

- Warm-up: Using written language, define “happiness.”
- Students will complete Concept Builder 1-B.
- Prayer journal
- Finish the next book you have been assigned.
- Students should systematically review their vocabulary words daily.