



LIFE·PAC®

Language Arts

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Alpha Omega Publications®

# LANGUAGE ARTS 1208

## CREATIVE WRITING

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# LANGUAGE ARTS 1208

## CREATIVE WRITING

The world of fiction and poetry is a reflection of the world in which we live, work, play, and worship. Although the events in a short story or a novel are not true in the sense that they actually happened, they are patterned after life as the author knows it. His characters behave as real people might behave in their situation. Poetry, too, reflects the world as the poet, sees it; it stirs in the reader emotions similar to those the poet feels and paints with words the vision that the poet sees.

By reading fiction and poetry, a student increases his understanding of people both in his own time and culture and in societies and times other than his own. Stories and poems written by other students can often provide as many insights as the works of professional writers. Each person has something to say. Each person has a view of God and man, a sense of right and wrong, and a conception of the meaning of life.

You may have read that each person has a story within him—his own. Viewed from different perspectives, the experience accumulated by every person can form the basis for many stories and many poems. Creative writing is more than a constructive outlet for your emotions and a source of entertainment for your reader. It can also be a means of sharing your Christian view of the world with others. Equally important, creative writing exercises your skill with words and provides you with an insight into the fiction and poetry of professional writers that you could gain in no other way.

In this LIFEPAC® you will study the elements of the short story and of poetry as they relate respectively to a particular story and to specific poems. You will then study the techniques for writing both short stories and poetry. In Section II you will learn to write descriptively, to develop an ear for dialogue, and to connect the separate elements of your narrative into a story that is more than the sum of its parts. Section III will provide you with the skills needed to link the sound of words with the images that they project into the reader's mind. Both sections provide the opportunity to use the acquired skills in your own writing. You will write both a short story and a poem, types of creative writing that will be uniquely your own, and yet not just your own; for they will be a reflection of universal truths.

### OBJECTIVES

**Read these objectives.** The objectives tell you what you will be able to do when you have successfully completed this LIFEPAC.

When you have completed this LIFEPAC, you should be able to:

1. Explain the interrelationship of plot, setting, characterization, and theme.
2. Distinguish between imagery and sound patterns in poetry.
3. Identify specific poetic devices in particular poems.
4. Write descriptive scenes and character sketches using your own experience as inspiration.
5. Write a dialogue between two or more characters.
6. Distinguish between description and narration.
7. Outline a plot.
8. Invent three characters and write a character sketch of each.
9. Write a short story.
10. Develop your own figures of speech.
11. Use specific poetic devices.
12. List the distinguishing characteristics of the sonnet and of other fixed forms.
13. Write two poems based on your own experience and observations.

**Survey the LIFE PAC.** Ask yourself some questions about this study. Write your questions here.

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## I. READING FICTION AND POETRY

Although the distinction between prose and poetry can be compared with the difference between speech and song, fiction is more closely related to poetry than are other such prose forms as the essay and the report. Both fiction and poetry are emotional experiences; both are products of the imagination. Although the concern of the fiction writer or the poet is not with fact, his work reflects his experience. Each life is unique, yet each repeats the timeless pattern of birth, love, and death. Each person experiences the same needs—for God, for food, for warmth, and for companionship. Such universal experiences—experiences common to all people—form the basis of both fiction and poetry.

Fiction is a prose account of significant events in the lives of imaginary characters, human or non-human. The two most common forms of fiction are the novel and the short story. In a novel the narrative involves a series of incidents that may affect many of the lives of many characters. In a short story the focus is on one central person and one major situation. Plot, characterization, setting, and theme are concentrated into a few pages.

Poetry, like fiction, may tell a story or it may simply describe or react to a single experience. Poetry has been written about man's relationship with God, about love for other people, about death, about the smell of a rose, about the song of a nightingale, and so forth. Poetry can be written about almost any subject, but it is always an intense emotional reaction demanding an equally intense emotional response from the reader. Poetry can be humorous, but the humor is a response to the situation.

This section is concerned with the elements that distinguish the short story and the poem from other forms of literature. By studying this section you will acquire a better understanding of both genre, or types. Your study will help you to appreciate the Biblical and secular works that are your literary heritage, and it will provide a foundation for the technical writing skills that you will learn in the later sections of this LIFE PAC.

### SECTION OBJECTIVES

**Review these objectives.** When you have completed this section, you should be able to:

1. Explain the interrelationship of plot, setting, characterization, and theme.
2. Distinguish between imagery and sound patterns in poetry.
3. Identify specific poetic devices in particular poems.

## VOCABULARY

Study these words to enhance your learning success in this section.

atmosphere

crisis

fastidious

aural

dominant foot

tone

**Note:** All vocabulary words in this LIFEPAAC appear in **boldface** print the first time they are used. If you are unsure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given.

### SHORT STORY FUNDAMENTALS

Fiction involves relationships. What happens to the people in a story is less important than their reaction to the events and the effect of this reaction on their relationships with one another. Whether the event is a natural disaster or a move from the farm to a city, its significance is in its effect on the people and their effect on one another.

A story, then, must have characters. Something must happen to the characters—they cannot be exactly the same people at the beginning of the story as at the end of it. A character sketch is not a story. Since events do not occur in a vacuum and since the society in which people live governs their lives to a remarkable extent, the story must have a background, or *setting*. This setting helps the reader to visualize the characters and their actions.

The most abstract and probably the most misunderstood element of the short story is *theme*. A theme is the concept or idea that underlies a story and gives it universal meaning. Theme is not synonymous with *moral*, however. A story may teach a lesson, as the Biblical account of Abraham and Isaac, but most modern short stories do not. Their themes are comments on life, not advice on how to live it.



**Not all short stories are fiction. Read the true story found in Genesis 22:1–9 and try to discover the theme. Then complete the following activities.**

- 1.1 a. What is the setting of the story? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. How much do you learn from the story about the physical appearance of the land? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 1.2 a. Who are the two main characters? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. What do you know about them from the story (do not use any other Biblical passages as reference)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 1.3 Number these incidents 1 through 7 to indicate their chronological order in the story.
- \_\_\_\_\_ An angel appears to Abraham.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Isaac asks where the ram is.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ God tells Abraham to sacrifice Isaac.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Abraham sees a ram in the thicket.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Abraham sets out with Isaac for Moriah.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Abraham binds Isaac and lays him on the altar.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Abraham makes an altar.



- 1.4 Could the events of the plot have occurred in any other order? \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.5 Describe the effects of the incident on Abraham. \_\_\_\_\_
- 
- 1.6 Without telling what happened in the story, briefly state its essence or theme. \_\_\_\_\_
- 

The following short story, “Three Small Miracles,” explores the relationships of three characters: a teenage girl, her older brother, and their younger sister. The young people have been left alone in their home while their parents attend a church conference in another town. The protagonist, Kelly, has been given an assignment she does not want to complete. The situation is ordinary enough, but it tests Kelly’s sense of responsibility, her honesty, and her love for her family.

### Three Small Miracles

Beyond the yellow ruffled curtains Kelly could see the bare branches of two elm trees, thin black arms framing the seeming emptiness of the winter sky. If she pulled the curtains closed, shutting out the bleakness, she would be trapped again in the too familiar, brightly colored bedroom, its floral bedspread and dainty white dressing table straight out of a mail-order catalogue.

She closed her eyes and lay back on her bed. The view out her window was of no more use to her than the English book that lay face down on her desk. Nothing was going to inspire her to write a poem. Nothing. Her parents had chosen this weekend, of all weekends, to leave her and Robbie in charge of the house. True, he and Evelyn were leaving her alone, but the room was almost too quiet. She might as well be downstairs with the blaring radio and the barking dog. She could get as much accomplished.

Sighing, she got up from the bed. All right, she thought, frowning at her reflection in the dressing table mirror. It’s your own fault. What are you going to do about it?

She picked up a brush, furiously snapping the brush through her auburn hair until it stood out from her head in a frizzy, electric-charged cloud.

“Ludicrous,” she said, addressing her reflection. “A comic spectacle.”

“Who are you talking to?”

Kelly jumped, startled, and turned around. Her nine-year-old sister, Evelyn, was standing in the doorway.

“Did you ever hear of knocking?” demanded Kelly, smoothing back the wild hair with one hand and holding up the brush with the other.

Evelyn looked up at Kelly, her lower lip trembling and her eyes threatening tears. “You usually let me come in.”

“I’m sorry,” Kelly said. “You just startled me, that’s all.”

“Oh.” Evelyn flounced over to the bed, sitting down on it and smiling as she smoothed her dress. “Can I stay?”

“Why not? It won’t make any difference.”

“What do you mean? What are you trying to do?”

“Write a poem,” Kelly said. She looked at the little girl, sitting so primly in her spotlessly clean dress, her white anklets neatly folded and unwrinkled. Evelyn had been blessed with their mother’s smooth brown hair and blue eyes. The perfect child, Kelly thought. If only she had an intellect to match her curiosity.

“Why?” asked Evelyn.

Kelly sighed, flopping the hairbrush onto the dressing table. It landed with a loud clunk.

“Uhhmm,” Evelyn said, rubbing her right index finger against her left one and raising her eyebrows.