

Ancient
HISTORY-BASED
WRITING LESSONS

in
Structure & Style

Student & Teacher Book

Lori Verstegen

Also by Lori Verstegen:

U.S. History-Based Writing Lessons, Volume 1
Explorers to the Gold Rush

U.S. History-Based Writing Lessons, Volume 2
Civil War Era to the Present Day

Sample

Ancient History-Based Writing Lessons
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INTRODUCTION

A Note to Teachers / Parents

The lessons in this book are designed to teach structure and style in writing. As they move through Ancient World History themes, the lessons incrementally introduce and review most of the models of structure and elements of style found in the Institute for Excellence in Writing's *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style*. **Instructions are directed to the student, but teachers should read over them with their students and help as necessary, especially with outlining and brainstorming.** It is assumed that teachers have attended IEW's Basic Seminar, either live or via DVD, and own the seminar workbook. Before each new unit it would be helpful for the teacher to review the appropriate information in that workbook.

SCHEDULE

The lessons are written so that students may easily move through them at their own pace. In general, it is recommended that younger students (5th grade and below) do one paragraph a week. For this reason, compositions that are longer than this are broken into separate sub-lessons for each paragraph. After the first two lessons of poetry, a weekly schedule might be as follows:

- Day 1 Read and outline the source text. Tell back the meaning from the outline.
Do the brainstorming page for one paragraph.
- Day 2 Review the outline and brainstorming page for the paragraph.
Use them to write the rough draft (one paragraph) with all requirements labeled. Have mom or teacher correct it.
- Day 3 Write a final draft. Be sure to try to make improvements to the rough draft.
- Day 4 Add an illustration.

More mature students (5th – 7th) may move more quickly through the lessons. Many will be able to write a paragraph each day and a 3-5 paragraph composition in a week. But be sure to allow all students enough time for adequate brainstorming and editing. Never accept the first draft as the final draft. Teach students to write, edit, polish, and rewrite. Strive for quality, not quantity.

A PERSONAL BOOK OF ANCIENT HISTORY

It is highly recommended that you encourage your students to polish each of their final drafts and even add illustrations. At the end of the year, they will have a collection of a variety of types of compositions that move through major themes in Ancient world history. These can be bound into a book that they can be proud of.

TEACHING A GROUP

The IEW method of teaching writing is particularly effective in a group or classroom setting. Students are more motivated to do their best when they know they will be sharing their work with classmates, so be sure to allow class time for this. More importantly, brainstorming the various elements of style taught in the program is tremendously more enjoyable and more productive when done as a group. Students enjoy sharing and “borrowing” ideas from each other. During a brainstorming session, teachers should write the students’ ideas for quality adjectives, strong verbs, and -ly words on the whiteboard, so they are available to the entire class.

CHECKLISTS

Checklists are provided for each assignment. These itemize all required elements and their corresponding point value. If you are teaching a group of students, **DO NOT HAVE THEM REMOVE THE CHECKLISTS FROM THEIR BOOKS** as the following week’s lesson may be on the back. Instead, make a copy of the checklist for each student’s paper when they turn it in to you. Use the copy when you grade it. Attach this copy, with the student’s grade on it, to the graded paper when you return it.

POETRY: The Ancient World

LESSON 1

QUALITY ADJECTIVES and ALLITERATION

In this book you will learn many ways to make your writing more interesting and more enjoyable to read. You will learn how to write with structure and with style. The appendix of his book contains a sheet on pages 107-108 that you will want to refer to often. It is entitled **STYLISTIC TECHNIQUES**. Throughout this course you will learn each of the elements of style on this page.

What do I mean when I say “style”? In relation to writing, *style* simply means *how* you express your ideas. Have you ever noticed when you read good literature that it is not written in the same way you would talk to someone? Written language is usually “fancier” than spoken language. The words are more sophisticated and there is more description. We say that written language is often “dressed-up.” That is why on the **STYLISTIC TECHNIQUES** page you see a section labeled “dress-ups.” You are going to learn how to “dress-up” your writing using the elements listed there.

The “dress-up” you will practice in this lesson is the **quality adjective**. An adjective is a word that describes a person, place, or thing. Using descriptive words like adjectives can help make your writing more interesting. However, there are many adjectives that are either overused or boring. You don’t want to use these. Look at the sentences below. Which have boring adjectives and which do you think have quality adjectives? Which are more interesting sentences? Which can you picture better?

The big pyramids were interesting.

The towering pyramids were enthraling.

The Romans were good warriors.

The Romans were unrivaled warriors.

On the back of the **STYLISTIC TECHNIQUES** page you will see a list of the adjectives that you may not use in this class (the **BANNED ADJECTIVES**). They are *good, bad, pretty, ugly, nice, mean, big, and a lot*. When you write, be sure **NOT** to use these words or words like them. Can you think of other boring adjectives? When you are tempted to use one of these, use a thesaurus to help you replace it with a stronger adjective. My favorite thesaurus is *The Synonym Finder* by Rodale. **You can also find a helpful list of substitute words for the banned adjectives in the Appendix on page 109.**

ALLITERATION

Alliteration is a poetic device. It is listed under “Decorations” on your **STYLISTIC TECHNIQUES** page. Alliteration is simply two or more words used close together that begin with the same sound (not necessarily letter). Using alliteration makes writing more poetic and more pleasing to the ear—as long as it is not over used. Can you find some in the sample poem on page 6? (*fast, furious; zigzagging ziggurats; harsh hard-hearted...*) In the poem you write for this lesson, try a few.

To practice using quality adjectives, follow the model below to write a poem about the ancient world. Try to include some alliteration, but not in every line. Illustrate your poem or copy it onto specialty paper. You may make some changes to the model; it is meant to be a general guide.

The Ancient World

Sumer, with (1 or 2 adjectives) rivers,
(1 or 2 adjectives) gardens,
(1 or 2 adjectives) ziggurats.

Egypt, with (1 or 2 adjectives) Pharaohs,
(1 or 2 adjectives) pyramids,
the (1 or 2 adjectives) Nile.

Israel, with God's (1 or 2 adjectives) law,
the (1 or 2 adjectives) temple,
and the (1 or 2 adjectives) promised land.

Greece, with (1 or 2 adjectives) gods,
(1 or 2 adjectives) athletes (or Olympics),
(1 or 2 adjectives) philosophers.

Rome, with (1 or 2 adjectives) emperors,
(1 or 2 adjectives) armies,
(1 or 2 adjectives) gladiators.

The Ancient World,

(adjective) , (adjective) , and (adjective).

Important note to teacher / parent: Be sure to help the student(s) brainstorm ideas for quality adjectives for each of the above nouns. Many adjectives on the lists on page 109 will work well in this poem. Have students turn to those lists. **Write several possible ideas on a whiteboard.** Breaking the poem into one or two stanzas a day will prevent this from becoming overwhelming.

Sample

(Written by a 6th grade student who chose to add phrases for rhyme. This was not required.)

THE ANCIENT WORLD

SUMER, with fast, furious rivers nourishing the land,
Vast, beautiful gardens which were picked by hand,
Jumbo, zigzag ziggurats planted in the sand.

EGYPT, with harsh, hard-hearted Pharaohs making servants pay,
Tops of towering pyramids seen for miles away,
The flourishing, flowing Nile, the only waterway.

Israel, with God's perfect law engraved in stone,
A holy, golden temple from which God's glory shone.

GREECE, with untrustworthy gods fashioned from stone,
Hard-working athletes desiring the Olympic throne,
Ingenious philosophers contemplating the unknown.

ROME, with prideful emperors giving strict commands,
Courageous, powerful armies conquering many lands,
Ruthless, desperate gladiators fighting hand-to-hand.

The ANCIENT WORLD,
Intriguing, brutal, and grand.

POETRY: The Great Flood

LESSON 2 STRONG VERBS AND -LY WORDS

Just as there are adjectives that are boring and/or overused, there are also verbs you should try to avoid when you write. Using strong verbs will make your writing sound much more sophisticated. Strong verbs are the next of the dress-ups you will learn to include in everything you write. In the samples below, can you spot the sentences with the boring verbs and the sentences with strong verbs?

The rain came down.

The rain pounded the earth.

“God will flood the earth,” Noah said.

“God will flood the earth,” Noah preached.

Some verbs that are not allowed to be used for this class include *go/went*, *come/came*, *say/said*, and *get/got*. They are listed under BANNED VERBS on the back of the STYLISTIC TECHNIQUES page in the back of the book (page 108). There are **substitutes for these verbs on page 110.**

State of being verbs (is, am, are, was, were, be, being, been) are also boring. The best verbs are verbs that show action. Note the difference between these two sentences:

His eyes were on the barren land.

His eyes scanned the barren land.

State of being verbs are not banned because you will need them as helping verbs sometimes, but try to substitute an action verb when you can.

-LY WORDS

You can make some verbs even more interesting by adding another dress-up to them, an “-ly word.” An -ly word is a word that ends in -ly. Most of these words are adverbs. **There is a list of quality -ly words on page 111.** Can you add -ly words to the strong verbs in the sentences above?

Examples: The rain pounded the earth mercilessly.

“God will flood the earth,” Noah preached continually.

His eyes carefully scanned the barren land.

RHYME

The writing for this lesson is a poem. Your composition will sound more “poetic” if you include some rhyme and some alliteration. It is not necessary that every line rhyme. It is also fun to mix the two techniques. Note how the writer of the sample poem on page 10 did this.

Below is a model poem for you to use as a guide to write a poem about the great flood. **You do not have to follow it exactly.** Write it on a separate sheet of paper. Fill in the blanks and in each line be sure to include a **strong** verb. **DO NOT USE IS, WAS, OR WERE.** Try to add some rhyme and some alliteration. **FOLLOW THE CHECKLIST.**

The Great Flood

The rain _____

Lightning _____

Thunder _____

Wind _____

The earth _____

Men _____

Inside the ark Noah _____

And his family _____

(The animals _____)

When the rain stopped and the land dried,

Noah _____

His eyes _____

(Choose at least His head _____

two of these) His arms _____

His body _____

His heart _____

Then he built an altar to the Lord,

and the Lord blessed him.

From Noah's family a new earth would begin.

Important note to teacher / parent: Be sure to help the student(s) brainstorm ideas for strong verbs for each line. Many verbs on the lists on **page 110** will work well in this poem. Have students turn to those lists. **Write several possible ideas on a whiteboard.** Breaking the poem into one stanza a day will keep this from becoming overwhelming.

CHECKLIST—*THE GREAT FLOOD POEM*

Checklist attached	(2) _____
Action verb in every line	(10) _____
Two -ly words	(4) _____
Two adjectives	(4) _____
Neatness / Picture	(5) _____
Alliteration or rhyme	(5) _____
No Banned words	(-1 each) _____
TOTAL	_____ /30

Teacher: For missing elements, subtract the number of points indicated from the total possible.

Sample

The Great Flood

Rain *crashed* upon the earth,
Lightening *flashed* across the sky,
Thunder *roared*,
Wind *ripped*,
The earth *rumbled*.

Men in horror would *scatter*,
But Noah *knew* it didn't *matter*.
Inside the ark Noah *knelt and prayed*,
And his family *thanked* God that they were saved.

When the rain *stopped* and the earth *dried*,
Noah *cried* in praise to God.
His eyes *wondered* and *wept*,
For across the sky colors were *swept*.
Noah's heart *rejoiced*.

Then he built an altar to the Lord,
and the Lord blessed him.
From Noah's family a new earth would begin.

Note: Italics indicate rhyme and alliteration.

ZIGGURATS

The ancient Egyptians were not the first ones to build pyramids. The Sumerians built them, too, but theirs are called ziggurats. They did not have smooth sides like the pyramids in Egypt. Their sides went up like stairs. The greatest ziggurat was in the city of Ur. It was made by King Ur-Nammu in about 2100 BC. It had seven layers, each smaller than the layer below it. This ziggurat was about 160 feet high and covered more than 30,000 square feet. At the top of it there was a couch and a table for the moon-goddess, Nanna, just in case she came to visit. Each ziggurat was a temple dedicated to one of the many gods of the Sumerians.

WRITING FROM KEY WORD OUTLINES: Ziggurats

Lesson 3
KEY WORD OUTLINING and
WRITING FROM NOTES

1. Choose three key words from each sentence of the ziggurat paragraph (page 12). Choose words that will best help you remember the meaning of the sentence. Write the words on the blank outline below. When you are finished, see if you can tell the meaning of each line of notes in a complete sentence.
2. Before you write your own paragraph, brainstorm ideas for including quality adjectives, strong verbs, and -ly words. Write the ideas on page 13.
3. Use your outline and the brainstorming ideas to help you write a paragraph about ziggurats. Be sure to include everything on the checklist. Underline one of each dress-up and write what it is in the right margin (*v*-, *-ly*, or *adj*).

OUTLINE "ZIGGURATS"

I. _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

BRAINSTORMING DRESS-UPS

STRONG VERBS

(Think of synonyms for the following)

built / made

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

(stairs) went up*

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

came (from / to visit)*

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Check the **GO / WENT & COME / CAME list on page 110.*

ADJECTIVES

(Think of adjectives to describe the following nouns. Page 110 may help)

Sumerians

ziggurats

pyramids

gods

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Name: _____

CHECKLIST

Checklist attached (2) _____

DRESS-UPS (*underline & indicate each in right margin*):

1 strong verb (*v*) (2) _____

1 quality adj (*adj*) (2) _____

1 -ly word (*-ly*) (2) _____

Alliteration (*Write "allit" in right margin*) (3) _____

Picture (4) _____

*TITLE FROM CLINCHER (5) _____

No banned words (-1 each) _____

TOTAL _____
(Possible 20)

(For missing elements, subtract the number of points indicated from the total possible.)

*When you create a title for your composition, try to use some of the words in your last sentence or synonyms for some of those words. This will help tie your report together. Reminding your reader of your beginning at the ending gives it a feeling of completion—that it has come full circle.