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# Spelling Wisdom

SAMPLE

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Compiled and Edited by Sonya Shafer

**Book 5**  
American Spelling Version

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# Spelling Wisdom

## Book Five

(American Version)

Learn today's 6,000 most frequently used words,  
presented in the writings of great men and women of history

Compiled and Edited  
by  
Sonya Shafer

Spelling Wisdom, Book Five (American Version)  
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# Contents

Spelling Wisdom, Book Five

---

Introduction . . . . .	15
A Word about Dictation	
How to Use <i>Spelling Wisdom</i>	
About <i>Spelling Wisdom</i>	
Exercise 1: Did Not Disturb . . . . .	19
From <i>Sense and Sensibility</i> by Jane Austen	
Exercise 2: Portage . . . . .	20
From <i>The Pioneers</i> by James Fenimore Cooper	
Exercise 3: Barbarous Neighbors . . . . .	21
From <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> by Jane Austen	
Exercise 4: The Best of Times . . . . .	22
From <i>A Tale of Two Cities</i> by Charles Dickens	
Exercise 5: The Volcano . . . . .	23
From <i>Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea</i> by Jules Verne	
Exercise 6: Imprudence is Selfishness . . . . .	24
From <i>Ourselves</i> by Charlotte Mason	
Exercise 7: Commodity . . . . .	25
From <i>The 1913 Webster Unabridged Dictionary</i>	
Exercise 8: Whistler . . . . .	26
From <i>Little Journeys to the Homes of the Great</i> by Elbert Hubbard	
Exercise 9: The Postern to be Guarded . . . . .	27
From <i>Ourselves</i> by Charlotte Mason	
Exercise 10: Loss and Gain . . . . .	28
A Poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow	
Exercise 11: Brains Absorbed . . . . .	29
From <i>Les Miserables</i> by Victor Hugo	

# Contents (cont.)

Spelling Wisdom, Book Five

---

Exercise 12: Science . . . . .	30
From <i>Ourselves</i> by Charlotte Mason	
Exercise 13: Sharks . . . . .	31
From <i>Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea</i> by Jules Verne	
Exercise 14: Live Simple Lives. . . . .	32
From <i>Ourselves</i> by Charlotte Mason	
Exercise 15: Leonardo . . . . .	33
From <i>Little Journeys to the Homes of the Great</i> by Elbert Hubbard	
Exercise 16: Providing Oxygen. . . . .	34
From <i>Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea</i> by Jules Verne	
Exercise 17: Chastity of Soul . . . . .	35
From <i>Ourselves</i> by Charlotte Mason	
Exercise 18: Four Couples. . . . .	36
From <i>Amusements in Mathematics</i> by Henry Ernest Dudeney	
Exercise 19: Velasquez’s Talent. . . . .	37
From <i>Little Journeys to the Homes of the Great</i> by Elbert Hubbard	
Exercise 20: Our Nuptial Hour . . . . .	38
From <i>A Midsummer Night’s Dream</i> by William Shakespeare	
Exercise 21: Loved Shakespeare . . . . .	39
From <i>The Story of My Life</i> by Helen Keller	
Exercise 22: Spring in Full Uniform . . . . .	40
From <i>Les Miserables</i> by Victor Hugo	
Exercise 23: Submarine Construction . . . . .	41
From <i>Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea</i> by Jules Verne	
Exercise 24: Temptation Comes from Without and from Within . . . . .	42
From <i>Ourselves</i> by Charlotte Mason	

# Contents (cont.)

Spelling Wisdom, Book Five

---

Exercise 25: Regarding the Daughter of Hamm . . . . .	43
From <i>The Letters of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart</i> by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	
Exercise 26: The Schooling of Nature. . . . .	44
From <i>Ourselves</i> by Charlotte Mason	
Exercise 27: Art As Expression . . . . .	45
From <i>Little Journeys to the Homes of the Great</i> by Elbert Hubbard	
Exercise 28: Mutability . . . . .	46
A Poem by Percy Bysshe Shelley	
Exercise 29: Conscience Must Be Instructed . . . . .	47
From <i>Ourselves</i> by Charlotte Mason	
Exercise 30: Negotiating Contracts . . . . .	48
Exercise 31: One of Her Habits of Mind. . . . .	49
From <i>The Story of My Life</i> by Helen Keller	
Exercise 32: The Training of a Trusty Spirit . . . . .	50
From <i>Ourselves</i> by Charlotte Mason	
Exercise 33: Her Husband's Income . . . . .	51
From <i>Amusements in Mathematics</i> by Henry Ernest Dudeney	
Exercise 34: Job Description . . . . .	52
Exercise 35: The Poet and the Essayist Are Our Teachers . . . . .	53
From <i>Ourselves</i> by Charlotte Mason	
Exercise 36: Language to Her Meant Life. . . . .	54
From <i>The Story of My Life</i> by Helen Keller	
Exercise 37: Sonnet 108 . . . . .	55
A Poem by William Shakespeare	
Exercise 38: The Hypothesis . . . . .	56
From <i>The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes</i> by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle	

# Contents (cont.)

Spelling Wisdom, Book Five

---

Exercise 39: Little Advantages . . . . .	.57
From <i>The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin</i> by Benjamin Franklin	
Exercise 40: Velasquez’s Popularity . . . . .	.58
From <i>Little Journeys to the Homes of the Great</i> by Elbert Hubbard	
Exercise 41: Letter to His Mother . . . . .	.59
From <i>The Letters of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart</i> by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	
Exercise 42: Helen’s Questions to Her Teacher . . . . .	.60
From <i>The Story of My Life</i> by Helen Keller	
Exercise 43: Partnerships. . . . .	.61
From <i>The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin</i> by Benjamin Franklin	
Exercise 44: Chance Opinions. . . . .	.62
From <i>Ourselves</i> by Charlotte Mason	
Exercise 45: Ecclesiastes 12:1–7. . . . .	.63
Exercise 46: Indian Fire. . . . .	.64
From <i>The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin</i> by Benjamin Franklin	
Exercise 47: Latin and Poetry . . . . .	.65
From <i>The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe</i> by Charles Edward Stowe	
Exercise 48: Miss Anne Sullivan’s Report in 1888. . . . .	.66
From <i>The Story of My Life</i> by Helen Keller	
Exercise 49: The House of Mind. . . . .	.67
From <i>Ourselves</i> by Charlotte Mason	
Exercise 50: Thorwaldsen . . . . .	.68
From <i>Little Journeys to the Homes of the Great</i> by Elbert Hubbard	
Exercise 51: Raphael’s Bride. . . . .	.69
From <i>Little Journeys to the Homes of the Great</i> by Elbert Hubbard	



# Contents (cont.)

Spelling Wisdom, Book Five

---

Exercise 52: Velasquez's Artistic Conscience . . . . .	70
From <i>Little Journeys to the Homes of the Great</i> by Elbert Hubbard	
Exercise 53: Impromptu Speech . . . . .	71
From <i>Lectures to My Students</i> by C.H. Spurgeon	
Exercise 54: All the World's a Stage . . . . .	72
From <i>As You Like It</i> by William Shakespeare	
Exercise 55: The Cherubs of Correggio . . . . .	73
From <i>Little Journeys to the Homes of the Great</i> by Elbert Hubbard	
Exercise 56: Move to Minnesota . . . . .	74
From <i>New National Fourth Reader</i> by Charles J. Barnes and J. Marshall Hawkes	
Exercise 57: A New Book . . . . .	75
From <i>The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe</i> by Charles Edward Stowe	
Exercise 58: Reconnoiter . . . . .	76
From <i>The Deerslayer</i> by James Fenimore Cooper	
Exercise 59: Study of the Bible . . . . .	77
From <i>Ourselves</i> by Charlotte Mason	
Exercise 60: Little Florence . . . . .	78
From <i>Dombey and Son</i> by Charles Dickens	
Exercise 61: Novels . . . . .	79
From <i>Ourselves</i> by Charlotte Mason	
Exercise 62: Fill Your Mind . . . . .	80
From <i>Lectures to My Students</i> by C.H. Spurgeon	
Exercise 63: A Piece of Work . . . . .	81
From <i>Julius Caesar</i> by William Shakespeare	
Exercise 64: Miss Anne Sullivan's Report in 1891 . . . . .	82
From <i>The Story of My Life</i> by Helen Keller	

# Contents (cont.)

Spelling Wisdom, Book Five

---

Exercise 65: Publishing Uncle Tom’s Cabin . . . . .	.83
From <i>The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe</i> by Charles Edward Stowe	
Exercise 66: Solving Puzzles. . . . .	.84
From <i>Amusements in Mathematics</i> by Henry Ernest Dudeney	
Exercise 67: The Strange Disappearance of the Bride . . . . .	.85
From <i>The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes</i> by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle	
Exercise 68: Castles in the Air. . . . .	.86
From <i>Walden</i> by Henry David Thoreau	
Exercise 69: Miss Anne Sullivan’s Report in 1891, Part 2 . . . . .	.87
From <i>The Story of My Life</i> by Helen Keller	
Exercise 70: Edwin A. Abbey . . . . .	.88
From <i>Little Journeys to the Homes of the Great</i> by Elbert Hubbard	
Exercise 71: The Byron Controversy . . . . .	.89
From <i>The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe</i> by Charles Edward Stowe	
Exercise 72: Psalm 91 . . . . .	.90
Exercise 73: Early Printing . . . . .	.91
From <i>Little Journeys to the Homes of the Great</i> by Elbert Hubbard	
Exercise 74: Marry You Cannot . . . . .	.92
From <i>The Deerslayer</i> by James Fenimore Cooper	
Exercise 75: To ‘Will’ Is Not to ‘Be Good’ . . . . .	.93
From <i>Ourselves</i> by Charlotte Mason	
Exercise 76: Implicated . . . . .	.94
From <i>Nicholas Nickleby</i> by Charles Dickens	
Exercise 77: About Toad Hall . . . . .	.95
From <i>The Wind in the Willows</i> by Kenneth Grahame	

# Contents (cont.)

Spelling Wisdom, Book Five

---

Exercise 78: Regarding Carl . . . . .	96
From <i>Beethoven's Letters 1790–1826</i> by Ludwig von Beethoven	
Exercise 79: Into the Woods . . . . .	97
From <i>The Deerslayer</i> by James Fenimore Cooper	
Exercise 80: People I Have Met . . . . .	98
From <i>The Story of My Life</i> by Helen Keller	
Exercise 81: The Tables Turned. . . . .	99
A Poem by William Wordsworth	
Exercise 82: Wait on the Lord . . . . .	100
From <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> by Daniel DeFoe	
Exercise 83: Marked Exceptions . . . . .	101
From <i>The Deerslayer</i> by James Fenimore Cooper	
Exercise 84: I See Mother . . . . .	102
From <i>The Deerslayer</i> by James Fenimore Cooper	
Exercise 85: Daily Schedule . . . . .	103
From <i>The Letters of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart</i> by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	
Exercise 86: In Jail . . . . .	104
From <i>The Wind in the Willows</i> by Kenneth Grahame	
Exercise 87: A Living Target . . . . .	105
From <i>The Deerslayer</i> by James Fenimore Cooper	
Exercise 88: The Last Supper . . . . .	106
From <i>Little Journeys to the Homes of the Great</i> by Elbert Hubbard	
Exercise 89: Meg's Wedding . . . . .	107
From <i>Little Women</i> by Louisa May Alcott	
Exercise 90: The Star-Spangled Banner . . . . .	108
(The American National Anthem) By Francis Scott Key	

# Contents (cont.)

Spelling Wisdom, Book Five

---

Exercise 91: On Czerny . . . . .	109
From <i>Letters of Franz Liszt, Volume 1</i> by Franz Liszt	
Exercise 92: Uncle Jim . . . . .	110
Exercise 93: Raphael's Life . . . . .	111
From <i>Little Journeys to the Homes of the Great</i> by Elbert Hubbard	
Exercise 94: A Little Sketch of the Four Sisters . . . . .	112
From <i>Little Women</i> by Louisa May Alcott	
Exercise 95: Livingstone and Stanley . . . . .	113
From <i>Wonders of the Tropics</i> by Henry Davenport Northrop	
Exercise 96: Stanley Finds Livingstone . . . . .	114
From <i>Wonders of the Tropics</i> by Henry Davenport Northrop	
Exercise 97: Summary of Points Considered So Far . . . . .	115
From <i>Ourselves</i> by Charlotte Mason	
Exercise 98: Home Again . . . . .	116
From <i>The Wind in the Willows</i> by Kenneth Grahame	
Exercise 99: Public Speaking . . . . .	117
From <i>Lectures to My Students</i> by C.H. Spurgeon	
Exercise 100: To Hope. . . . .	118
A Poem by John Keats	
Exercise 101: Fighting to Save the World (1939) . . . . .	120
A Speech by Sir Winston Churchill	
Exercise 102: About Owls . . . . .	121
From <i>Little Men</i> by Louisa May Alcott	
Exercise 103: Just Mere Thoughts. . . . .	122
From <i>The Secret Garden</i> by Frances Hodgson Burnett	

# Contents (cont.)

Spelling Wisdom, Book Five

---

Exercise 104: One More Journey . . . . .	123
From <i>Wonders of the Tropics</i> by Henry Davenport Northrop	
Exercise 105: The Two-Sided Shield. . . . .	124
From <i>Swinton's Advanced Fourth Reader</i>	
Exercise 106: The Wild Wood. . . . .	125
From <i>The Wind in the Willows</i> by Kenneth Grahame	
Exercise 107: Beethoven's Health. . . . .	126
From <i>Beethoven's Letters 1790–1826</i> by Ludwig von Beethoven	
Exercise 108: If Thou Be a Lord or Laborer . . . . .	127
From <i>Rules for Decent Living</i> by John Wyclif	
Exercise 109: America. . . . .	128
A Poem by Ralph Waldo Emerson	
Exercise 110: The Board Meeting . . . . .	130
Exercise 111: A Letter to Nero. . . . .	131
A Letter by Seneca	
Exercise 112: Troublesome Business . . . . .	132
From <i>Beethoven's Letters 1790–1826</i> by Ludwig von Beethoven	
Exercise 113: Washington's Rules of Behavior. . . . .	133
From <i>Swinton's Advanced Fourth Reader</i>	
Exercise 114: Amy's Art . . . . .	134
From <i>Little Women</i> by Louisa May Alcott	
Exercise 115: Studying the Limberlost . . . . .	135
From <i>Freckles</i> by Gene Stratton-Porter	
Exercise 116: Second Inaugural Address . . . . .	136
A Speech by Abraham Lincoln	

# Contents (cont.)

Spelling Wisdom, Book Five

---

Exercise 117: Speech to Harrow School . . . . .	137
A Speech by Sir Winston Churchill	
Exercise 118: The Wants of Man . . . . .	138
A Poem by John Quincy Adams	
Exercise 119: The Moral Virtues . . . . .	140
From <i>The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin</i> by Benjamin Franklin	
Exercise 120: The Bridge . . . . .	141
From <i>The Swiss Family Robinson</i> by Johann Wyss	
Exercise 121: A Day of Prayer and Fasting . . . . .	142
A Declaration by John Adams	
Exercise 122: To My Brothers . . . . .	143
From <i>Beethoven's Letters 1790–1826</i> by Ludwig von Beethoven	
Exercise 123: My Last Duchess . . . . .	145
A Poem by Robert Browning	
Exercise 124: Man Must Be Subject to the Laws of His Creator . . . . .	147
From <i>Commentaries on the Laws of England: Of the Nature of Laws in General</i> by Sir William Blackstone	
Exercise 125: Inaugural Address . . . . .	148
A Speech by Theodore Roosevelt	
Exercise 126: Shoot High . . . . .	150
From <i>Freckles</i> by Gene Stratton-Porter	
Exercise 127: Speaking of Perplexities . . . . .	152
From <i>Amusements in Mathematics</i> by Henry Ernest Dudeney	
Exercise 128: Romans 12 . . . . .	154
Exercise 129: Address Before the Diet of Worms . . . . .	156
A Speech by Martin Luther	

# Contents (cont.)

Spelling Wisdom, Book Five

---

Exercise 130: Her Little Ship Came In . . . . .	158
From <i>Jo's Boys</i> by Louisa May Alcott	
Exercise 131: Give Me Liberty . . . . .	160
A Speech by Patrick Henry	
Exercise 132: The Deserted Village. . . . .	162
A Poem by Oliver Goldsmith	
Exercise 133: The Laurence Museum . . . . .	164
From <i>Little Men</i> by Louisa May Alcott	
Exercise 134: The Character of Napoleon. . . . .	166
A Speech by Charles Phillips	
Exercise 135: Address as Lord Rector of Edinburgh University. . . . .	168
From a Speech by Thomas Carlyle	
Exercise 136: Dorothy Q.: A Family Portrait . . . . .	170
A Poem by Oliver Wendell Holmes	
Exercise 137: First Inaugural Address. . . . .	172
A Speech by George Washington	
Exercise 138: Psalm 37 . . . . .	174
Exercise 139: I Have a Dream. . . . .	176
A Speech by Martin Luther King, Jr.	
Exercise 140: On American Motherhood . . . . .	179
A Speech by Theodore Roosevelt	
Bibliography . . . . .	183
Index . . . . .	185

# Introduction

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## A Word about Dictation

Just as Charlotte Mason taught handwriting in the context of an interesting passage or text, so she taught spelling, not in isolated lists of words but in the context of useful and beautiful language.

We can present the child with a list of words to learn, such as: “am, will, can, I, ought.” How much more pleasant to rearrange that list of words into an inspiring or interesting thought, like Charlotte Mason’s motto for students: “I am, I can, I ought, I will.”

Charlotte used this principle with prepared dictation to teach spelling, beginning in about the third or fourth grade. In prepared dictation, the student is given a passage to study before he is required to write it—the chief objective being to write it correctly.

Miss Mason believed that “the gift of spelling depends upon the power the eye possesses to ‘take’ (in a photographic sense) a detailed picture of a word; and this is a power and habit which must be cultivated in children from the first. When they have read ‘cat,’ they must be encouraged to see the word with their eyes shut, and the same habit will enable them to image ‘Thermopylae.’”

She discouraged teachers from allowing their students to see a word incorrectly spelled, for “once the eye sees a misspelt word, that image remains; and if there is also the image of the word rightly spelt, we are perplexed as to which is which.”

Of course, students will not spell every word correctly every time, therefore, it becomes “the teacher’s business to prevent false spelling, and, if an error has been made, to hide it away, as it were, so that the impression may not become fixed.”

“Dictation lessons, conducted in some such way as the following, usually result in good spelling.”

(Quotations from *Home Education*, pp. 240, 241)



# How to Use *Spelling Wisdom*

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1. Once or twice a week **give** your student a dictation exercise you want him to learn. Simply print or copy the exercise from this book. (You have permission to duplicate the exercises for use within your immediate household.)

2. Look through the exercise together and **identify** the words that you or the student thinks needs his attention in order to spell them confidently.

3. Instruct the student to **study** the identified words—one at a time—until he is sure he can spell every word in the exercise. This study period may take anywhere from a few minutes to several days, depending on the length of the exercise and the needs of the student. Set aside a little time each day for brief but consistent study of the exercise as needed. (See below for how to study a word.)

4. When the student is confident that he can spell every word in the exercise, **dictate** the passage to him one phrase at a time, saying the phrase only once. Pause after each phrase is spoken to allow him time to write it. Keep a careful eye on his efforts. If a word is misspelled, quickly cover it with a small self-stick note so its false spelling won't be engraved in the student's mind.

5. After the dictation is complete, the student should study any words that he misspelled and, when he is ready, **write** the words correctly on the self-stick notes.

## How to Study a Word

You may want to work with younger or uncertain students to teach them how to study an unfamiliar word, as outlined below. Older students or students more accustomed to using the method below may study independently.

- Copy the word carefully, making sure it is spelled correctly.
- Look at the word until you can close your eyes and see it spelled correctly in your mind.
- Practice writing the word only if the teacher is nearby to immediately erase any misspellings.

Along with Charlotte's method of visualizing the word, we might add one or two study techniques for students who like to use their other senses in the learning process.

- Say the letters aloud in order while looking at the word.
- "Write" the word with your first finger on a sheet of paper or other smooth surface, being careful to look at the word and spell it correctly.

# About *Spelling Wisdom*

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When I read about Charlotte Mason’s method of using prepared dictation to teach spelling, I loved the idea and wanted to use it. But I was concerned about missing some necessary words as I selected dictation passages to use. I felt very secure using my traditional spelling lists that I knew included the most frequently used words in the English language, which my children definitely needed to learn to spell.

So I decided to try to combine the two: dictation exercises that I could be sure included the most frequently used words in the English language. The *Spelling Wisdom* series is the result of that effort.

The five books’ exercises become progressively longer and contain more difficult words as you work through the series. Each book contains 140 exercises. If you cover two exercises per week, you should be able to finish a *Spelling Wisdom* book in a little less than two school years. Charlotte began dictation exercises with students around the third or fourth grade. With that schedule in mind, here is a rough model of which books correspond to which grades:

Grades 3–4	Book One
Grades 5–6	Book Two
Grades 7–8	Book Three
Grades 9–10	Book Four
Grades 11–12	Book Five

## Content

The exercises cover a broad range of subjects and topics to reinforce Charlotte’s love of a full and generous education. Because the books are not thematic, you can use and benefit from the exercises no matter what you may be studying in other school subjects.

I wanted to keep Miss Mason’s high standards for beautiful thoughts and engaging narratives, so the sources of these exercises are speeches, letters, and quotations of famous people; excerpts from historical documents; descriptions of historical people and events; poetry; Scripture; excerpts from great literature; and selections from old readers and books for young people. Most of the passages were written prior to 1900. (I did find it necessary to write a few original exercises that involved the more modern words, like “infrastructure” and “computer.”) Each book’s bibliography and table of contents will provide more specific information as to which sources were used.

The 6,000 most-frequently-used English words included in these exercises are taken from A General Service List of English Words by Michael West (Longman, London 1953) and The Academic Word List by Coxhead (1998, 2000). We have also included more than 6,500 other words that we think well-educated children should know. These bonus words are in addition to those on the lists, making a total of more than 12,500 English words covered in the *Spelling Wisdom* series of books.

# About *Spelling Wisdom* (cont.)

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## **Index**

The index in the back of each *Spelling Wisdom* book will give you a list of all the words included in that book's exercises. If you want to concentrate on or review a particular word, just look in the book's index to find any other exercises that use it. The index should also prove to be a friendly help if you spot a word or two in the child's written narrations that need some attention. You can easily find and assign a dictation exercise that uses the word in question and reinforces its correct spelling.

## **Spelling Variations**

You may have noticed that the older writings contain some different spellings than we use today. For example, in Charlotte Mason's *Home Education* passage quoted at the beginning of this introduction, the word we spell today as "misspelled" was originally spelled "misspelt." Because the main objective of dictation is correct spelling, I updated such older words to modern spelling.

Two versions of the *Spelling Wisdom* series are available: American and British. The British version contains the British spelling preferences that I'm aware of. If I overlooked a possible alternate spelling, you can easily write your preferred spelling on the printed sheet that you give your student. (Then would you please e-mail us with the details of the change, or any other corrections, so I can change it in the book? Just contact us at <http://simplycm.com/contact>. Thank you!)

## **Poetry Variations**

Many poets "take liberties" with word spellings in order to make the words fit in their assigned poetical places. Several of the poetry selections in these dictation exercises contained contracted words, such as "o'er" instead of "over." Since the goal of dictation is correct spelling, and missing letters don't help us reach that goal, I replaced contracted words with their spelled-out versions. You can easily enjoy the original form of the poems in your regular poetry studies, but for dictation purposes I thought the prudent path was to display the words correctly spelled.

## **Punctuation Variations**

Because Charlotte advocated dictating "with a view to the pointing [punctuation], which the children are expected to put in as they write," I have attempted to edit the punctuation of the older passages to bring them more closely into conformity with modern punctuation guidelines. Encourage the children to make sure they are familiar with where the capital letters and punctuation marks go in their assigned exercises, even as they make sure they can spell all the words.

It is my hope that this collection of dictation exercises will make your journey more enjoyable and your path a little smoother on the "royal road to spelling."

(Quotations from *Home Education*, pp. 241, 242)

*Exercise 9*  
**The Postern to be Guarded**  
From *Ourselves* by Charlotte Mason

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The place to keep watch at is not the way of our particular sin but that very narrow way, that little portal, where ideas present themselves for examination. Our falls are invariably due to the sudden presentation of ideas opposed to those which judgment and conscience, the porters at the gate, have already accepted.

These foreign ideas get in with a rush. We know how that just man, Othello, was instantly submerged by the idea of jealousy which Iago cunningly presented. We know of a thousand times in our own lives when some lawless idea has forced an entrance, secured Reason as its advocate, thrown a sop to Conscience, and carried us headlong into some vain or violent course.

## Exercise 16

# Providing Oxygen

From *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* by Jules Verne

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It became necessary to renew the atmosphere of our prison and, no doubt, the whole in the submarine boat. That gave rise to a question in my mind. How would the commander of this floating dwelling-place proceed? Would he obtain air by chemical means, in getting by heat the oxygen contained in chlorate of potash and in absorbing carbonic acid by caustic potash? Or—a more convenient, economical, and consequently more probable alternative—would he be satisfied to rise and take breath at the surface of the water, like a whale, and so renew for twenty-four hours the atmospheric provision?

In fact, I was already obliged to increase my respirations to eke out of this cell the little oxygen it contained, when suddenly I was refreshed by a current of pure air and perfumed with saline emanations. It was an invigorating sea breeze charged with iodine. I opened my mouth wide, and my lungs saturated themselves with fresh particles.

## Exercise 20

# Our Nuptial Hour

From *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare

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Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour  
Draws on apace; four happy days bring in  
Another moon; but, O, methinks, how slow  
This old moon wanes! She lingers my desires,  
Like to a step-dame or a dowager,  
Long withering out a young man's revenue.

HIPPOLYTA. Four days will quickly steep themselves in night;  
Four nights will quickly dream away the time;  
And then the moon, like to a silver bow  
New-bent in heaven, shall behold the night  
Of our solemnities.

THESEUS. Go, Philostrate,  
Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments;  
Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth;  
Turn melancholy forth to funerals;  
The pale companion is not for our pomp. Exit PHILOSTRATE  
Hippolyta, I wooed thee with my sword,  
And won thy love doing thee injuries;  
But I will wed thee in another key,  
With pomp, with triumph, and with reveling.

*Exercise 117*  
**Speech to Harrow School**  
By Sir Winston Churchill

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Almost a year has passed since I came down here at your Head Master's kind invitation in order to cheer myself and cheer the hearts of a few of my friends by singing some of our own songs. The ten months that have passed have seen very terrible catastrophic events in the world—ups and downs, misfortunes—but can anyone sitting here this afternoon, this October afternoon, not feel deeply thankful for what has happened in the time that has passed and for the very great improvement in the position of our country and of our home? Why, when I was here last time we were quite alone, desperately alone, and we had been so for five or six months. We were poorly armed. We are not so poorly armed today; but then we were very poorly armed. We had the unmeasured menace of the enemy and their air attack still beating upon us, and you yourselves had had experience of this attack; and I expect you are beginning to feel impatient that there has been this long lull with nothing particular turning up!

But we must learn to be equally good at what is short and sharp and what is long and tough. It is generally said that the British are often better at the last. They do not expect to move from crisis to crisis; they do not always expect that each day will bring up some noble chance of war; but when they very slowly make up their minds that the thing has to be done and the job put through and finished, then, even if it takes months—if it takes years—they do it.

Another lesson I think we may take, just throwing our minds back to our meeting here ten months ago and now, is that appearances are often very deceptive, and as Kipling well says, we must "...meet with Triumph and Disaster. And treat those two impostors just the same."

You cannot tell from appearances how things will go. Sometimes imagination makes things out far worse than they are; yet without imagination not much can be done. Those people who are imaginative see many more dangers than perhaps exist; certainly many more than will happen; but then they must also pray to be given that extra courage to carry this far-reaching imagination. But for everyone, surely, what we have gone through in this period—I am addressing myself to the School—surely from this period of ten months, this is the lesson: never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never—in nothing, great or small, large or petty—never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense. Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy. We stood all alone a year ago, and to many countries it seemed that our account was closed, we were finished. All this tradition of ours, our songs, our School history, this part of the history of this country were gone and finished and liquidated.

Very different is the mood today. Britain, other nations thought, had drawn a sponge across her slate. But instead, our country stood in the gap. There was no flinching and no thought of giving in; and by what seemed almost a miracle to those outside these Islands, though we ourselves never doubted it, we now find ourselves in a position where I say that we can be sure that we have only to persevere to conquer.

You sang here a verse of a School Song: you sang that extra verse written in my honor, which I was very greatly complimented by and which you have repeated today. But there is one word in it I want to alter; I wanted to do so last year, but I did not venture to. It is the line: "Not less we praise in darker days."

I have obtained the Head Master's permission to alter "darker" to "sterner." "Not less we praise in sterner days."

Do not let us speak of darker days; let us speak rather of sterner days. These are not dark days; these are great days—the greatest days our country has ever lived; and we must all thank God that we have been allowed, each of us according to our stations, to play a part in making these days memorable in the history of our race.

## Exercise 122

# To My Brothers

From *Beethoven's Letters 1790–1826* by Ludwig von Beethoven

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Heiligenstadt, Oct. 6, 1802

To My Brothers Carl and Johann Beethoven:

Oh! ye who think or declare me to be hostile, morose, and misanthropical, how unjust you are, and how little you know the secret cause of what appears thus to you! My heart and mind were ever from childhood prone to the most tender feelings of affection, and I was always disposed to accomplish something great. But you must remember that six years ago I was attacked by an incurable malady, aggravated by unskillful physicians, deluded from year to year, too, by the hope of relief, and at length forced to the conviction of a lasting affliction (the cure of which may go on for years, and perhaps, after all, prove impracticable).

Born with a passionate and excitable temperament, keenly susceptible to the pleasures of society, I was yet obliged early in life to isolate myself and to pass my existence in solitude. If I at any time resolved to surmount all this, oh! how cruelly was I again repelled by the experience, sadder than ever, of my defective hearing! And yet I found it impossible to say to others, “Speak louder; shout! for I am deaf!” Alas! how could I proclaim the deficiency of a sense which ought to have been more perfect with me than with other men—a sense which I once possessed in the highest perfection, to an extent, indeed, that few of my profession ever enjoyed! Alas, I cannot do this! Forgive me therefore when you see me withdraw from you with whom I would so gladly mingle. My misfortune is doubly severe from causing me to be misunderstood. No longer can I enjoy recreation in social intercourse, refined conversation, or mutual outpourings of thought. Completely isolated, I only enter society when compelled to do so. I must live like an exile. In company I am assailed by the most painful apprehensions from the dread of being exposed to the risk of my condition being observed. It was the same during the last six months I spent in the country. My intelligent physician recommended me to spare my hearing as much as possible, which was quite in accordance with my present disposition, though sometimes, tempted by my natural inclination for society, I allowed myself to be beguiled into it. But what humiliation when any one beside me heard a flute in the far distance, while I heard nothing, or when others heard a shepherd singing, and I still heard nothing! Such things brought me to the verge of desperation and well nigh caused me to put an end to my life. Art! art alone deterred me. Ah! How could I possibly quit the world before bringing forth all that I felt it was my vocation to produce? And thus I spared this miserable life—so utterly miserable that any sudden change may reduce me at any moment from my best condition into the worst. It is decreed that I must now choose Patience for my guide! This I have done. I hope the resolve will not fail me, steadfastly to persevere till it may please the inexorable Fates to cut the thread of my life. Perhaps I may get better, perhaps not. I am prepared for either. Constrained to become a philosopher in my twenty-eighth year! This is no slight trial and more severe on an artist than on any one else. God looks into my heart, He searches it and knows that love for man and feelings of benevolence have their abode there! Oh! ye who may one day read this, think that you have done me injustice, and let any one similarly afflicted be consoled by finding one like himself, who, in defiance of all the obstacles of Nature, has done all in his power to be included in the ranks of estimable artists and men.

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My brothers Carl and Johann, as soon as I am no more, if Professor Schmidt be still alive, beg him in my name to describe my malady and to add these pages to the analysis of my disease, that at least, so far as possible, the world may be reconciled to me after my death. I also hereby declare you both heirs of my small fortune (if so it may be called). Share it fairly, agree together, and assist each other. You know that anything you did to give me pain has been long forgiven. I thank you, my brother Carl in particular, for the attachment you have shown me of late. My wish is that you may enjoy a happier life and one more free from care than mine has been. Recommend Virtue to your children; that alone, and not wealth, can ensure happiness. I speak from experience. It was Virtue alone which sustained me in my misery; I have to thank her and Art for not having ended my life by suicide. Farewell! Love each other. I gratefully thank all my friends, especially Prince Lichnowsky and Professor Schmidt. I wish one of you to keep Prince L's instruments; but I trust this will give rise to no dissension between you. If you think it more beneficial, however, you have only to dispose of them. How much I shall rejoice if I can serve you even in the grave! So be it then! I joyfully hasten to meet Death. If he comes before I have had the opportunity of developing all my artistic powers, then, notwithstanding my cruel fate, he will come too early for me, and I should wish for him at a more distant period; but even then I shall be content, for his advent will release me from a state of endless suffering. Come when he may, I shall meet him with courage. Farewell! Do not quite forget me, even in death; I deserve this from you, because during my life I so often thought of you and wished to make you happy. Amen!

Ludwig Von Beethoven

## *Exercise 130*

# Her Little Ship Came In

From *Jo's Boys* by Louisa May Alcott

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A more astonished woman probably never existed than Josephine Bhaer when her little ship came into port with flags flying, cannon that had been silent before now booming gaily, and, better than all, many kind faces rejoicing with her, many friendly hands grasping hers with cordial congratulations. After that it was plain sailing, and she merely had to load her ships and send them off on prosperous trips to bring home stores of comfort for all she loved and labored for.

The fame she never did quite accept; for it takes very little fire to make a great deal of smoke nowadays, and notoriety is not real glory. The fortune she could not doubt and gratefully received; though it was not half so large a one as a generous world reported it to be. The tide, having turned, continued to rise and floated the family comfortably into a snug harbor where the older members could rest secure from storms and whence the younger ones could launch their boats for the voyage of life.

All manner of happiness, peace, and plenty came in those years to bless the patient waiters, hopeful workers, and devout believers in the wisdom and justice of Him who sends disappointment, poverty, and sorrow to try the love of human hearts and make success the sweeter when it comes. The world saw the prosperity, and kind souls rejoiced over the improved fortunes of the family; but the success Jo valued most, the happiness that nothing could change or take away, few knew much about.

It was the power of making her mother's last years happy and serene; to see the burden of care laid down forever, the weary hands at rest, the dear face untroubled by any anxiety, and the tender heart free to pour itself out in the wise charity which was its delight. As a girl, Jo's favorite plan had been a room where Marmee could sit in peace and enjoy herself after her hard, heroic life. Now the dream had become a happy fact, and Marmee sat in her pleasant chamber with every comfort and luxury about her, loving daughters to wait on her as infirmities increased, a faithful mate to lean upon, and grandchildren to brighten the twilight of life with their dutiful affection. A very precious time to all, for she rejoiced as only mothers can in the good fortunes of their children. She had lived to reap the harvest she sowed; had seen prayers answered, hopes blossom, good gifts bear fruit, peace and prosperity bless the home she had made; and then, like some brave, patient angel, whose work was done, turned her face Heavenward, glad to rest.

This was the sweet and sacred side of the change; but it had its droll and thorny one, as all things have in this curious world of ours. After the first surprise, incredulity, and joy which came to Jo, with the ingratitude of human nature, she soon tired of renown and began to resent her loss of liberty. For suddenly the admiring public took possession of her and all her affairs, past, present, and to come. Strangers demanded to look at her, question, advise, warn, congratulate, and drive her out of her wits by well-meant but very wearisome attentions. If she declined to open her heart to them, they reproached her; if she refused to endow her pet charities, relieve private wants, or sympathize with every ill and trial known to humanity, she was called hard-hearted, selfish, and haughty; if she found it impossible to answer the piles of letters sent her, she was neglectful of her duty to the admiring public; and if she preferred the privacy of home to the pedestal upon which she was requested to pose, "the airs of literary people" were freely criticized.

She did her best for the children, they being the public for whom she wrote, and labored stoutly to supply the demand always in the mouths of voracious youth—"More stories; more right away!" Her family objected to this devotion at their expense, and her health suffered; but for a time she gratefully offered herself up on the altar of juvenile literature, feeling that she owed a good deal to the little friends in whose sight she had found favor after twenty years of effort.

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But a time came when her patience gave out; and wearying of being a lion, she became a bear in nature as in name, and returning to her den, growled awfully when ordered out. Her family enjoyed the fun and had small sympathy with her trials, but Jo came to consider it the worse scrape of her life; for liberty had always been her dearest possession, and it seemed to be fast going from her. Living in a lantern soon loses its charm, and she was too old, too tired, and too busy to like it. She felt that she had done all that could reasonably be required of her when autographs, photographs, and autobiographical sketches had been sown broadcast over the land; when artists had taken her home in all its aspects and reporters had taken her in the grim one she always assumed on these trying occasions; when a series of enthusiastic boarding-schools had ravaged her grounds for trophies and a steady stream of amiable pilgrims had worn her doorsteps with their respectful feet; when servants left after a week's trial of the bell that rang all day; when her husband was forced to guard her at meals and the boys to cover her retreat out of back windows on certain occasions when enterprising guests walked in unannounced at unfortunate moments.