A Charlotte Mason Writing Plan: From Copywork to Composition

Grades 1 to 6

by Kimberly D. Garcia

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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 see a procedure, perform the procedure, and then teach the procedure to someone else. This method, because it involves different learning styles, ensures understanding and competency on the part of the medical student. Essentially, this process closes the loop by having the student take in information, interact with the information, and reproduce that information appropriately. The information is entrenched in the firmly within the student's memory.

While this process is commonly used in medical schools across the country, the learning approach—seeing, doing, and teaching—is used by many teachers for many subjects. This is probably because the approach incorporates different learning styles when teaching one subject. In fact, the writing process used by Charlotte Mason to teach young children also has at its core the elements of this three-step process. Basically, within the 3-step process of narration, copywork, and dictation, children are seeing, doing, and teaching. This is why narration, copywork, and dictation are so effective.

In the following pages, you'll find more information on the three steps—narration, copywork, and dictation—as the foundational tools for teaching writing and how each one is beneficial alone and how, collectively, they combine to create a complete writing program for the beginning writer.

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

Oral narrations are foundational in teaching children to write. It gives them the opportunity to practice writing without the use of pen and paper.

Seeing:

When a child narrates, he has to have something to narrate. There has to be some input of information into the child's mind either from information heard or read. That information can be worthwhile information or it can be twaddle (silly, watered down material).

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. He is orally composing.

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 be learning the information in context. Narration may seem like a simple process, but it is a very effective and very powerful tool when put into practice.

More on Narrations
(There is more than one way to narrate)

Oral Narrations

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.

Oral narrations are vital because they allow children the opportunity to construct quite extensive compositions well before they are able to write those compositions on paper. The beauty of this process is that children are able to develop naturally their ability to compose, without being hampered by the normal developmental limitations of childhood such as fine motor skills.

Written Narrations

Full-length 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. This is a much more complicated process. (See written summations on the next page.)

If your student has difficulty with narrations (oral or written), ask any number of the following questions:

1. Who was the main character?
2. What was the character like?
3. Where was the character?
4. What time was it in the story?
5. Who else was in the story?
6. Does the main character have an enemy?
   (The enemy may be another character, himself, or nature.)
7. Did the main character have a problem? If not, what did the character want?
8. What does the main character do? What does he say? If there are others, what do they do?
9. What happens to the character as he tries to solve his problem?
10. Is there a moral to the story? If so, what was it?

11. What happens at the end of the story? Or how does the main character finally solve his problem?

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.)

Written Summations:

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

At the end of each oral narration **(I suggest both oral narrations and written summations for students transitioning to writing their own summations. There is value in doing both because it helps the child to review what he wants to write before he attempts to put it on paper.)**, 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—less is best. Younger students will sometimes begin each sentence with "First,…" or "At the beginning,…" This is okay; however, once the student masters summarizing, ask him to recap without these types of words. Tell him to begin with the subject or the time.

> Ex: When Louisa May Alcott was a young girl, she was very happy because she spent her time playing with her sisters and writing in her diary.

The benefits of written summations are many. They will help your student to think linearly from the beginning of the reading selection to the end. They also

provide the right amount of content for the beginning writer. (For the reluctant writer, start with one sentence, allowing him to dictate the remaining sentences to you.) Additionally, the act of summarizing teaches students to identify the main thread or central idea of a passage. (Even though your child begins to write his written summations, have him continue his oral narrations without limit.)

Some children find full-length narrations easier to write than written summations. 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. If your student needs help, summarize the passage with him and have him write it down.

How Narrations Teach Style

As most of us go about our daily routines, we do tend to speak informally, using slang, informal sentence structure, and colloquial expressions. When students narrate, they have to remember the content of the information they are 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.

When a child is first learning to narrate, his ability to remember may not be as strong. In those instances, he will attempt to plug the holes with words that are already in his memory bank. 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 passage—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 began to take on the style of the original passage.

An Area in which I differ with Ms. Mason

Written narrations alone are not enough.

I came across the writings of Leonardo da Vinci while working on the medieval books. 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 one 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 painting or any other art.

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, including writing.

My personal desire is that my children develop superior skills in the area of composition, and to do so they must be given the sound theory to accompany their practice of composing written material. 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 them 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 see the letters, the words, and the 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. That information includes spelling and grammar.

Copywork may seem straightforward, but it isn't always. 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 them exactly as he sees them.

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:

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. 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 him to see the forest, without having to focus on the individual trees.

The student can reap the benefits of copying the longer paper without the busywork of copying copious amounts of writing. If a child has progressed to copywork 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 children 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. Studying the model first provides the seeing and taking in of 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. She covered any new grammatical concepts and spelling words. 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 work. 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 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. 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 a 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 and know 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.

A 6-Year Writing Plan

The process of teaching children to write with narration, copywork, and dictation is only the beginning. The purpose of this method is to give young writers the skills they need to move on to more advanced level writing.

By effectively combining narration, copywork, dictation, and outlining, young children are able to easily and naturally move from copying letters to writing 3-paragraph papers.

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 as a means of review.

The schedule above is just one way to teach writing. It is an organized attempt to help students learn to structure 3-paragraphs papers by the end of 6th grade.

My Write from History 6-Year Writing Plan

Grade		Foundational Writing Skills: Narration	Foundational Writing Skills: Copywork (Doubles as handwriting practice)	Foundational Writing Skills: Dictation	Cross Curriculum Writing (Weekly)	End of Year Writing Goals
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 **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.

Creating your own schedule:
(See the blank form on page 24)

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 he 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. I recommend that you continue with narration (oral and written), copywork (paragraphs or outlines), and dictation (at full paragraphs) throughout the first six years, until these skills become second nature to your student—longer if necessary.

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.

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 practice writing longer papers. They also free the student from worrying about how the paper is to be done. They give students an opportunity to experiment with their own personal style of writing. And full-length narrations give parents the opportunity

to judge the student's writing skills prior to editing. This helps the parent to identify the student's strengths and weaknesses. And if a student enjoys the subject, narrations present the student the opportunity to develop a love for writing.

6-Year Writing Plan						
		Foundational Writing Skills			Cross Curriculum Writing (Weekly)	End of Year Writing Goals
Grade		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.

With the Write from History books, children are immersed in a snapshot of history. Over time, children see a pattern in the transition of events, as well as writing topics and priorities.

Many writing programs teach writing as an island unto itself, and parents have to take the skills learned and apply it across the curriculum. Write from History, on the other hand, brings relevance to the writing lessons, saving parents time and money.

About Write from History

Level 1

Write from History Level 1 teaches writing the Charlotte Mason way for grades one to three. Each level 1 book is divided into four chapters: short stories, time period tales, time period poetry, and fun cultural tales.

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 selections included in each level 1 book.

To coordinate the selections in Write from 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.

Reading Levels

Chapters I and II contain chapters taken from living books that are historically relevant. 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 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:

The selections in the series provide children with relevant material for narrations: oral and or written.

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.

Copywork:

There are two copywork models for each reading selection. The first has lines immediately beneath each word (see page 34). The second is slightly more advanced: the model is at the top of the paper and the lines are below (see page 35).

The copywork models are approximately 2 sentences in length; some are 3 shorter sentences or 1 longer one. These models were chosen because they accommodate 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 slightly more experienced writer 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 studied dictation.)

Once again, Ms. Mason's ideas are simple, yet effective. 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. Then 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 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.

With younger students, read the passage as many times as necessary; however, if the model is appropriate in size for the student, one reading should be sufficient. 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.)

Date for timeline

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.

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."

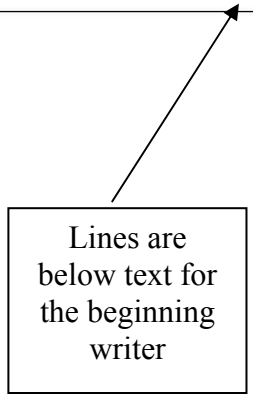
When Cyrus became a man, he succeeded his father as king of Persia; he also succeeded his grandfather Astyages as king of Media. He was a very wise and powerful ruler, and he made his country the greatest of any that was then known. In history he is commonly called Cyrus the Great.

Written Summation

May be used for dictated narrations as well.

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.



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

Model Practice 2

More advanced copywork requiring the student to remember the model

Model Practice 3

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.

About Write from History Level 2

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 (See page 38), and the other is a primary source document—an excerpt of *The Apology* by Xenephon (an historian and contemporary of Socrates) on the trial of Socrates (See page 43).

The Write from History, Level 2 books teach writing the Charlotte Mason way for students in grades 3+. (Many parents use these books with children in the sixth grade. It is definitely appropriate for that age as well.) Each level 2 book 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 from the historical period have been selected. Chapter II contains excerpts from primary source documents. Chapter III contains poetry from or about the historical period. And Chapter IV contains fun 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 History, Level 2 book.

To coordinate Write from 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 two models for each reading selection. The first model is the same as the copywork model that followed the reading selection. The second model, which is in italics, is also from the reading selection. It has been added for studied dictation.

Because Write from History was written for grades 3–5, some selections 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 fourth and sixth 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 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.

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 model for a few minutes. (I write our dictation model on the whiteboard.) Write down any unknown words that are more difficult for him. (Have him write these new 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 below are sample pages from *Write from Ancient History, Level 2*.

Date for timeline.

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.

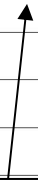
Everybody talked about it, repeated the best jokes, and went again and again to see and laugh over it. We are told that Socrates went there himself one day; and when asked why he had come, he quietly said, "I came to find out whether, among all the faults of which I am accused, there may not be some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

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.

Written Summation



Students may complete a full oral narration and a written summation. To help him complete the written summation, help your student identify the main idea of the selection.

Ask:

I. What/who was this selection about?

A. What happened at the beginning?

B. What happened during the middle?

C. What happened at the end?

In many instances, this simple process will help your student write a basic paragraph. Feel free to tweak the paragraph as necessary.

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.

(If he isn't ready, there is no need to make him copy it all.)

Model Practice 2

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

Model Practice 3

This area has been added for flexibility. You may write the dictation model from the appendix in the model practice 2 area for studied dictation. When he is ready, cover the handwritten model and dictate it to him.

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 ed
study; and with regard to health a man prefers t
assembly the citizens of Athens, I presume,
wisdom rather than their own relations. And is i
your fathers and brothers, and, bless me! your o
believe to be the wisest authorities on military n

"No doubt, Socrates," replied Meletus, "because

"Well then," rejoined Socrates, "does it not s
ordinary concerns the best people should obtai
preference; but in my case, simply because I ar
the greatest treasure men possess—education, I
the capital charge?"

An excerpt from a primary source document

For selections as these, read them to your student. For older students, they 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 when they are older and are required to work with primary source documents.

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 so 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.

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?"

Model Practice 1

Copywork selections such as these present children with ideas from classical works rather than simple facts and words.

Use this opportunity to discuss the meaning of Socrates' words.

Model Practice 2

Model Practice 3

Brookdale House Products

Write from History Series

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. Models that are relevant to the student's study of history.

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