

A CREATIVE APPROACH TO THE CLASSICAL PROGYMNASMATA

Writing Rhetoric

THESIS PART 1

TEACHER'S EDITION

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Writing & Rhetoric Book 10: Thesis Part 1 Teacher's Edition
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Teaching Thesis Part I

In this tenth book of the Writing & Rhetoric series, your students will be crafting persuasive essays with expository, descriptive, and narrative elements. In other words, these thesis essays integrate the four traditional modes of discourse. A persuasive essay cannot stand by itself. To persuade, it needs compelling information (exposition), vivid word pictures (description), and engaging stories (often in summary form). The persuasive writer marshals all these elements together in one seamless and extended argument.

The thesis essay is the most important form of academic writing. Any student who hopes to succeed in college must learn to write it well. In a respected publication by Harvard University, the author lists the fundamentals for academic writing, and many of these fundamentals are found in the thesis essay: the thesis itself, evidence, analysis, structure (or arrangement), counterargument, sources, and reflection.¹ Thus, even schools and students who have not yet worked with the *progymnasmata* will still greatly benefit from doing the exercises in this book.

In addition to academic writing, the thesis essay will help students to examine and sustain ideas, skills much needed to raise the level of discourse in today's public conversations. We live in a time of poisonous sound bites, memes, and partisan news, but what is necessary for the flourishing of a republic is an informed citizenry capable of engaging in rational and civil discussions. The principles of rhetoric that helped build the Roman republic for over four hundred years are still valuable—no, vital—for citizens of the American republic today.

The ancient authors of the *progymnasmata* (Graeco-Roman manuals of composition) certainly saw the value of thesis writing and made it one of the culminating exercises of the program. Nicolaus the Sophist² tells us that thesis provides practice for two species of rhetoric (judicial and epideictic) and includes all the parts of a classic oration: the introduction, the confirmations, the antitheses, the refutations (solutions), and the conclusion (epilogue).³ We would add that writing persuasively has myriad uses, from requesting a raise at work to pleading for the release of a prisoner of conscience.⁴

Modern persuasive essays are inspired by the thesis exercise found in the ancient *progymnasmata*. The rhetorician Aphthonius tells us that “thesis is a logical examination of any matter under inspection.”⁵ These investigations would involve general topics in answer to speculative questions such as: Should people marry? Should people sail? Should a city be surrounded by walls? In this book, students will answer speculative questions as they analyze a short story (fiction) and a chapter from an autobiography (nonfiction) as well as seek to define the abstract idea of beauty.

In a thesis essay, the writer argues for a logical position and, at the same time, includes counterarguments so that the opposition has a chance to be heard. The writer essentially articulates the opposition's rebuttals and then disproves them with fresh arguments. These tertiary arguments are known as refutations. While the writer must certainly defend her position, the fact that she must consider other positions makes the thesis essay a genuine exploration and thought experiment.

1. Gordon Harvey, “A Brief Guide to the Elements of the Academic Essay,” Harvard Writing Project Brief Guide Series (Harvard College Writing Program, 2009), https://writingproject.fas.harvard.edu/files/hwp/files/hwp_brief_guides_elements.pdf.

2. Nicolaus the Sophist lived in the fifth century AD and was the last of the writers of the existing *progymnasmata*. Although sophists have a bad reputation today as artful deceivers, they were the philosophers who developed rhetoric and were often very sincere teachers, not practicing deception at all. The word “sophist” (wise one) is related to the word “philosopher” (lover of wisdom).

3. George A. Kennedy, trans., *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 170.

4. prisoner of conscience: someone imprisoned for his religious or political views

5. George A. Kennedy, trans., *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 120.

This exploration is of great and lasting value for students. It forces them to consider: “Do I really believe what I’m saying? Have I provided enough evidence to convince myself and others? Am I expressing myself in a credible manner?”

In writing thesis essays, students take another step forward toward the goal of mastering rhetoric. The readings will continue to be a foundation of pleasure and instruction, but students will use the content of the readings to develop arguments. They will continue working with topic sentences and they will expand the meaning of those sentences through evidence, quotations, and explanation. In other words, all the basics are in place for creating an ethos, pathos, and logos based on careful reasoning, compelling illustrations, and reliable sources. By looking more deeply into texts, students will extend their dialogic (conversational) relationship with reading. The kinds of questions asked in the exercises in this book will lead students to consider the readings in the context of their lives and the world about them.

Unpacking *Thesis Part 1*

You will find nearly every lesson organized around the chapter readings. Narration, questions for discussion, and exercises in composition all emerge within the context of the readings. We find that contextualization helps to reinforce memory and the laddering of skills.

This book is divided into two portions:

Lessons 1 to 6—The first portion develops the vital aspects of writing a thesis essay from the opening hook to the concluding paragraph.

Lessons 7 to 10—The second portion guides students step by step through three thesis essays.

To stretch and strengthen the process of writing and speaking, both portions of this book contain special features such as Write & Discuss, Go Deeper, Writing Time, Speak It, and Revise It. These sections are explained in the following paragraphs.

The Lesson Reading

Every lesson contains excerpts from various sources: articles, speeches, stories, and biographies. The Writing & Rhetoric series uses readings that are culturally significant and that contain lasting insights. In making our selections, we seek to apply the admonition of educator Charlotte Mason: “The intellectual life . . . has but one food whereby it lives and grows—the sustenance of living ideas.”⁶ We choose readings that contain “living ideas”—i.e., ideas that encourage the intellectual development of children by being challenging and important.

All of the readings in the book are recorded in a downloadable MP3 file so that your students can experience the pleasure of being read to.

Tell It Back—Narration

Every time students hear a substantial reading in this book, they will also practice narrating it back, either orally or in writing. Multiple intelligences—memory, sequence, main idea—are developed by this practice. In addition to exercising their executive functions, students will continue to internalize an outline of the material. Some educational models have based their entire strategy on the important skill of narration.

As part of narration, students are encouraged to annotate select texts for main idea, vocabulary words, questions, and points of interest. Annotation will help to make a text truly “sink into” a student’s imagination and develop the habit of reading closely.

Talk About It and Speak It

These two sections promote our conviction that writing, speaking, and thinking are critical skills that work together. Some educators believe that difficulties with writing stem from a lack of deeper

6. Charlotte Mason, *School Education*, AmblesideOnline, accessed January 24, 2019, https://amblesideonline.org/CM/vol3complete.html#3_01.

thought. These books use comprehension, reading aloud, discussion, and even oral performance as ways to help students become critical thinkers according to the way their bodies (and brains) are made. These three abilities—thinking, speaking, and writing—enlarge one another when practiced together.

Write & Discuss

While students anticipate writing their thesis essays, Write & Discuss (lessons 1–6, 9) keeps their writing and persuasive skills active. This section invites students to respond to thought-provoking readings of various lengths—or paintings in lesson 3—by writing down their ideas prior to a class discussion. Writing sets up students for a more rigorous and engaged discussion. It gives them time to reflect on the reading and to know their thoughts better. As Flannery O'Connor said, "I write because I don't know what I think until I read what I say." The principle of writing in order to know what we think is the main purpose of Write & Discuss. When students have their ideas tangibly spelled out on a piece of paper, it is easier for them to courageously engage in a challenging conversation.

Go Deeper

This section, found in lessons 1–6, seeks to deepen comprehension of the skills taught in those particular lessons. Students will variously examine summary, main idea, amplification, speculative questions, thesis statements, audience, antitheses, hooks, rhetorical devices, supporting arguments, direct quotes and paraphrasing, appeals to authority, and citations.

Writing Time

This aspect of the book, found in lessons 7–8 and 10, is the most obvious. Each Writing Time section features an opportunity to write copiously or abundantly. Copiousness stretching exercises teach students to reach for new words to express variations of the same idea. That way they can experience the joy of the abundance of language as well as of finding precise words.

In this book students will also learn to write well-crafted persuasive essays, which include an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Practice in this section includes instruction on transitions and style. Each essay follows clear prewriting prompts, and the principle of imitation is always at work.

The thesis essay follows a clear—and ancient—outline. It starts with an introduction that grabs audience attention with a hook and then states and explains the paper's main argument or thesis. The next two paragraphs confirm (support) the thesis with sound reasoning and backing from textual sources. The next two paragraphs consider counterarguments to the thesis (antitheses) and refute them, also with sound reasoning and textual support. Finally, a conclusion wraps up the essay by expanding on the original thesis.

Revise It

In this book, students will continue to critically analyze their own writing. The Revise It section (lessons 7–8, 10) offers students the opportunity to improve their writing, and the writing of others, by strengthening phrasing, finding grammar errors, and proofreading.

Historical Note

The material covered in much of the Writing & Rhetoric series is loosely tied to periods in history. *Fable* and *Narrative I* borrow their stories from Greek and early Roman times. *Narrative II* picks up with the late Roman Empire, while *Chreia & Proverb* continues into the Middle Ages. *Refutation & Confirmation* moves into the experience of colonial America. In *Commonplace*, students read selected writings from late colonial America, the American Revolution, and the Federalist period. *Encomium & Vituperation* covers many colorful personalities from the Civil War era to that of the Wild West. *Comparison* covers the part of American history from the Gilded Age to the Great Depression. *Description & Impersonation* focuses primarily on twentieth-century writers, including

two figures from the world wars. The purpose of this progression is to provide rich content that helps timeline-based schools integrate history with the language arts. As one discipline reinforces the other, students will retain a powerful impression of the periods of history they study.

This volume, *Thesis Part 1*, begins a new effort to synthesize the ancient and the modern, using readings that span the course of history. Our next book, *Thesis Part 2*, will also be comprehensive in approach as students study great speeches and apply the principles of the thesis essay to speech writing.

Important Notes

Flexibility is built into the program.

We have crafted this book to be useful to students at different levels with different needs. For instance, teachers can ask their students to complete some exercises verbally instead of in writing. If, on the other hand, teachers desire more written work, they can ask students to respond to Talk About It questions in writing. Teachers can also have students work together to tackle parts of lessons that are difficult. Education is personal, and one size does not fit all. Please use your judgment to determine what is best for your student(s) in terms of discipline and delight.



Review summary instructions.

This icon directs students to a section of the book with some pointers on how to summarize. Here, students will learn how to shorten a lengthy paragraph into a much more succinct form. To be brief is to use words wisely. It is a way to communicate important information to the audience while showing concern for its needs (and its attention span).



Practice a rhetorical device.

Some new rhetorical devices are introduced in this book, and others are reviewed. The formal study of rhetoric collects and draws upon these devices throughout a student's life as a writer and a speaker. We wanted to make special note of these to help you track the growing number of "tools" in your students' rhetorical "toolbox."



Begin prewriting.

This icon indicates that students will be doing prewriting exercises, including creating hooks, theses, and supporting arguments.



Include elocution instruction.

This icon indicates that elocution instruction should be included with the exercise and guides you to a section of the book that provides full elocution instructions. We believe that speaking well makes students better writers and that writing well makes for better speakers. In this book, we focus on the various aspects of speaking well, which include recitations, speeches, dramatic presentation, and the sharing of student work. Your students should practice one aspect of elocution every time they do public speaking.



Use a recording device.

This icon indicates that, depending on the size of the class and the availability of technology, you may want to have your student(s) record their work from the Speak It and sometimes the Revise It sections and play it back. This is an excellent way for them to hear the words and the qualities of their performances. They will learn elocution faster if they hear themselves as well as each other.

Best wishes as you embark upon these new and fascinating exercises with your students!

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce the idea that those who use the power of rhetoric also should strive for goodness.

In this lesson, students will practice:

- narration in summary form
- critical thinking
- written reflection and follow-up discussion
- writing summaries and identifying main ideas
- amplification



Lesson 1

Quintilian and the Classical Ideal: First Strive for Goodness

Rhetoric is the art of writing and speaking persuasively. Having mastery of rhetoric is like having a superpower. It may not be as dramatic as bulletproof skin or a Jedi mind trick, but it will help you to influence how some people think and how other people act. Of course, that influence can be a good thing or a bad thing, depending on who's using it.

One of the earliest philosophers of rhetoric, Aristotle (384–322 BC), recognized that rhetorical powers could be useful for defending truth and justice in public discussions. He also believed that a master rhetorician could persuade difficult audiences to believe his arguments by appealing to his own good character and by stirring up emotions. Old Aristotle believed so strongly in the usefulness of rhetoric that he wrote an instruction manual about how to become a rhetorical master and dubbed it—you guessed it—*Rhetoric*.

At the same time, Aristotle acknowledged that some people might use rhetorical powers to harm and manipulate others. “One who uses such power of speech unjustly might do great harm . . . ,” he declared.¹ However, he added that any good thing—strength or health, wealth or leadership—can also be used for evil purposes. Although these things can be abused, Aristotle

1. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts, The Internet Classics Archive, accessed January 19, 2018, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/rhetoric.1.i.html>.

asserts that individuals “can confer the greatest of benefits by a right use of these.”² As the Romans used to say, “*Abusus non tollit usum*”: The abuse of something is not an argument against its proper use. Indeed, Aristotle believed that, even though rhetoric could be abused and misused, mastering the art of rhetoric was very important. He said, “It is absurd to hold that a man ought to be ashamed of being unable to defend himself with his limbs, but not of being unable to defend himself with speech and reason.”³

In other words, people should value the ability to defend themselves with rhetoric just as much as they value the ability to use their arms and legs to fend off a physical attack.

Flash forward a few hundred years after Aristotle to the first-century Roman Empire. It was then that one of the greatest teachers of all time, Quintilian, trained his students to be top-notch persuaders. He believed that the best thing any school could do for a young person was to make him an amazing orator. Like Aristotle, Quintilian thought it was absurd for anyone to give up using rhetoric simply because it could be misused. He joked, “Let us give up eating, it often makes us ill; let us never go inside houses, for sometimes they collapse on their occupants; let never a sword be forged for a soldier, since it might be used by a robber.”⁴ Rather, Quintilian said it was a useful and worthwhile task

for a good [person] to defend his friends, to guide the senate by his counsels, and to lead peoples or armies to follow his bidding. . . . Is it not a noble thing, by employing the understanding which is common to mankind and the words that are



▲ The dark side: Rhetoric can be misused.

Mansudae Grand Monument, April 29, 2010. Image courtesy of John Pavelka, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mansudae_Grand_Monument_\(4610364189\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mansudae_Grand_Monument_(4610364189).jpg).



2. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*.

3. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*.

4. Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory*, trans. Harold Edgeworth Butler (Loeb Classical Library, 1920–1922), bk. 2, chap. 16, http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Quintilian/Institutio_Oratoria/home.html.

used by all, to win such honor and glory that you seem not to speak or plead, but rather, as was said of Pericles,⁵ to thunder and lighten?⁶

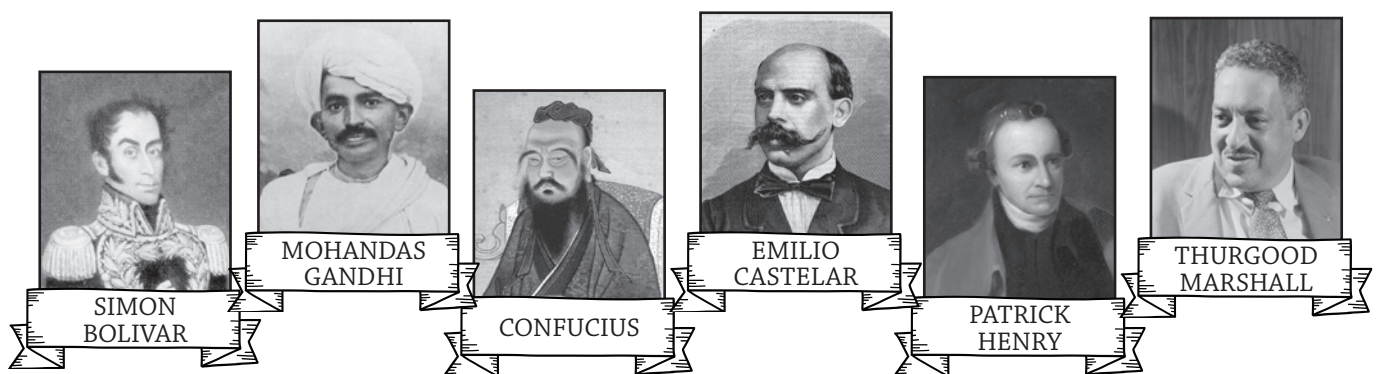
Note that different cultures and people groups have differing ideas about what it means to be good. The Roman idea of goodness, as explained by Quintilian, emphasizes some slightly different aspects of goodness than some of the world's great religions. For instance, Judaism and Christianity emphasize selflessness and charity in addition to the virtues that Quintilian thought of as goodness.

Wow. Quintilian implies that with rhetoric our words can be as powerful as thunder and lightning! But don't miss that he said that rhetoric was good when it was used by "a good person." Without mincing words, he says, "I hold that no one can be a true orator unless he is also a good [person]."⁷

What did Quintilian mean by "a good person"? More than likely he meant someone who worked to develop within herself the solid Roman virtues of courage, self-control, generosity, justice, piety, and wisdom. There are many different opinions about what makes a person good, but the bottom line is that Quintilian felt it was important to use rhetoric for the good of others.

When a person who strives for goodness writes or speaks, rhetoric can become a significant power to bring about good ends. What about you? Do you strive for goodness?

More than likely you'll say "yes," and you probably already have many qualities that are good. Yet developing goodness doesn't happen all at once. It is the study of a lifetime, and a young person such as yourself may have a lot of learning and growing left to do when it comes to goodness. In fact, too often people think that they are better than they really are, and that misbelief can get in the way of developing goodness. A professor at Princeton University asked his students what their position on slavery would have been if they had been white and living in the South before abolition. Guess what? According to this professor, the students all claimed they would have been abolitionists!



5. Pericles (c. 495–429): the renowned statesman and leader of Athens during its Golden Age

6. Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory*, bk. 2, chap. 16.

7. Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory*, bk. 1, chap. 2.

They all would have bravely spoken out against slavery, and worked tirelessly in the cause of freeing those enslaved. . . .

Of course, it is complete nonsense. Only the tiniest fraction of them, or of any of us, would have spoken up against slavery or lifted a finger to free the slaves. Most of them—and us—would simply have gone along. Many would have supported the slave system and, if it was in their interest, participated in it as buyers and owners or sellers of slaves.

So I respond to the students' assurances that they would have been vocal opponents of slavery by saying that I will credit their claims if they can show me evidence of the following: that in leading their lives today they have embraced causes that are unpopular among their peers and stood up for the rights of victims of injustice whose very humanity is denied, and where they have done so knowing (1) that it would make THEM unpopular with their peers, (2) that they would be loathed and ridiculed by wealthy, powerful, and influential individuals and institutions in our society, (3) that it would cost them friendships and cause them to be abandoned and even denounced by many of their friends, (4) that they would be called nasty names, and (5) that they would possibly even be denied valuable educational and professional opportunities as a result of their moral witness.

In short, my challenge to them is to show me where they have at significant risk to themselves and their futures stood up for a cause that is unpopular in elite sectors of our culture today.⁸

To put it bluntly, very few people would actually risk their popularity, their money, their friendships, their education, or their opportunities in order to take an unpopular stand. In other words, we often are not as good as we think we are, and recognizing this should motivate us to keep working at developing goodness. Taking an unpopular stand requires serious courage and other virtues as well: determination, for instance, and sound judgment and prudence. Just as mastering rhetoric takes time and practice, so does developing those virtues. It is more of a journey than an arrival.

No one ever becomes perfectly good and has nothing left to work on. You must constantly, deliberately own up to your weaknesses and actively support what is noble and right. In this way, your life will be held up to an honest mirror similar to the one in the story of Snow White. You may say, "Mirror, mirror on the wall, am I improving after all?" And the mirror may say back, "Oh, Man (or Oh, Woman), in this life you won't arrive; the vital thing is that you strive." Or it might dispense with the rhyme and tell you bluntly, "You were really kind to that elderly woman yesterday, but then afterward you bragged about it to your friends. Let's work on a little humility now." Throughout all your days, your mirror will keep saying, "You can still improve," but perhaps you

8. Robert P. George, Facebook, August 17, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/robert.p.george.39/posts/10212810047458661>.
Used by permission of the author.

can also say back to it, “You’re right. I’m not yet perfectly good. I still have room to grow, but I am living well along the way.”

One of the purposes of these books, these *progymnasmata*, is to give you the tools for influencing others—for example, to stand up for what you believe in. When the time comes for you to take a stand, you will need to be able to express yourself clearly in writing or speech. The thesis essay is really the highest height of the *progymnasmata* because it can marshal every skill that came before it to make the strongest case for your ideas. You’ve made the climb and you’ve reached the pinnacle! But please remember: While you are learning to master rhetoric, to influence others, you must also strive to develop goodness, so that your influence is used for the good of others.

Narcissism

Nowadays it seems as though there are a lot of young people who are obsessed with their images—posting a bazillion selfies online; fixating on diet, clothes, celebrities; snapping photos back and forth. While it’s not necessarily bad to take selfies or think about how you look, being obsessed with doing those things can lead to excessive self-love, which is also known as narcissism. Narcissism can lead people to believe that they are better than they really are, that they don’t need to strive to improve. A professor of psychology in California recently surveyed thousands of students and found that 30 percent were narcissistic, a 15 percent leap from 1982!⁹ This rapid growth in narcissism among young people is a cause for concern for the health of our American culture.

Most people like to see themselves in the best possible light, and that’s perfectly natural. However, we must be on guard against thinking we are good (and special and remarkable) without questioning whether or not this assessment is based on reality. We must be on guard against the kind of thinking that leads us to use powerful tools such as rhetoric for our own selfish purposes, such as winning admiration or building power, rather than for the good of others. By working to develop the qualities of goodness, we can help ourselves to avoid the pitfalls of narcissistic thinking.



9. Jean M. Twenge and Joshua D. Foster, “Birth Cohort Increases in Narcissistic Personality Traits Among American College Students, 1982–2009,” *Psychology Today*, accessed June 8, 2018, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/files/attachments/4330/npitimeupdatespps.pdf>.

Tell It Back—Summary



This icon points to more tips on summarizing at the back of the book.

TE

Summarize aloud three or four important ideas in this lesson. Then, in the space provided, write one well-crafted sentence that tells the main idea of the lesson as best as you understand it. To arrive at the main idea, ask yourself, “What is the chief purpose of the lesson?”

Main idea:

— Sample main idea: A person who uses the power of rhetoric should strive to be good in ways that can include courage, self-control, generosity, justice, piety, and wisdom. —

Talk About It—

TE

1. Anne Shirley of *Anne of Green Gables* by Lucy Maud Montgomery asks the question, “Which would you rather be if you had the choice—divinely beautiful or dazzlingly clever or angelically good?” If you had to choose one of those qualities, which would it be and why? Why do teachers of rhetoric care about whether or not a person wants to be good?

TE

2. The word “narcissism” means “excessive self-love.” The word is derived from a Greek myth about a handsome young man named Narcissus who rudely rejected all of his suitors, including the mountain nymph Echo. As punishment for his conceit, he was fated to fall in love with his own reflection on the surface of a pond. There he lay on the grassy bank, staring into his own two eyes, pining to embrace himself, until he withered away and died. Rhetoricians say that people must desire goodness and be concerned for the good of others. How does narcissism undermine the goodness demanded by the practice of rhetoric? What do you think happens to friendships and other important relationships in the life of a person who is a narcissist?



▲ *Echo and Narcissus* by John William Waterhouse

TE

3. Can you think of a situation or issue today in which it would be very costly to an individual if he or she were to take an unpopular stand?

Write & Discuss—

We find the following reflection in the Jewish book of moral teachings entitled *Chapters of the Fathers*, or *Pirkei Avot*:

Who is wise?

He who learns from everyone.

Who is strong?

He who conquers himself.

Who is rich?

He who is content with his lot.

Who is honorable?

He who treats all men honorably.¹⁰



Throughout the ages, rhetoric has demanded that its practitioners be people who strive after goodness. The *Pirkei Avot* contains some universal ideas defining goodness in human beings: wisdom, self-control, contentment, and honor.

What would you say are the qualities of a good person? Think carefully about an individual from history or from your own experience whom you respect and admire. Then take fifteen minutes to write down your thoughts about the qualities of goodness and how those qualities are expressed in that particular person. After that, share your thoughts with your teacher or with a partner, and try to arrive at a description of a person who strives for goodness—the kind of person who would use the skills of rhetoric for good purposes. Write your description in the space provided.

Observations of the individual:

— Sample answer: Although he was imperfect—like all human beings—I really respect George Washington as a man of great goodness. He sacrificed his comfort and happiness to lead the ragged Continental Army to victory, and then, through wisdom and prudence, he led the struggling United States to stability. He showed courage in the face of danger, both on and off the battlefield. He willingly gave up power instead of grasping it like a dictator. He was hospitable to hundreds of visitors to Mount Vernon every year, and he loved his wife, Martha, faithfully for forty years.

10. The words of Simon Ben Zoma from *Pirkei Avot*, chapter 4. The full text of this book can be found at https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/680274/jewish/Pirkei-Avot-Ethics-of-the-Fathers.htm.

Description of a person who strives for goodness:

Sample answer: A person who strives for goodness is self-sacrificing, wise, prudent, courageous, kind, and loyal.

Go Deeper—



1. **SUMMARY, MAIN IDEA, AND DEFINITION**—One of the fascinating things about folktales and fairy tales is that they entertain us at the same time that they teach us lessons about life. We learn to avoid talking to strangers from “Little Red Riding Hood.” We learn not to make rash promises from “Rumpelstiltskin.” We learn that looks can be deceiving from “Beauty and the Beast.” We learn that it’s important to use our wits from “Hansel and Gretel.”

Perhaps even more important than these moral lessons, which are similar to the lessons taught by fables, is the clear picture of good and evil that we get from many folk- and fairy tales. We know pretty quickly which characters are decent and kind, and we know which characters are harmful. This clear picture of good and evil—along with the way good characters are rewarded—helps children tilt toward wanting to live a good life.

Look at the following short tales. For each one, summarize the tale, as instructed, in the space provided. Then identify and write down the tale’s main idea and describe how each tale defines goodness or wickedness. (Keep in mind that most narratives are subject to interpretation and there may be more than one suitable main idea or definition of goodness or wickedness. If you compare your answer with the answers of your classmates, you may be surprised by the variety of perspectives.)

Summary vs. Main Idea—What’s the Difference?

A summary is a shortened, condensed version of a piece of writing. The main idea is the most important thought that comes out of the writing. For example, look at the following summary and main idea for “The Tortoise and the Hare”:

Summary: In a race between a slow-moving tortoise and a fast-running hare, the tortoise crosses the finish line first by persevering toward the goal.

Main idea: Success depends on persistence.

Example:

“Odds and Ends,” a German Tale

There was once upon a time a maiden who was pretty, but idle and negligent. When she had to spin she was so out of temper that if there was a little knot in the flax, she at once pulled out a whole heap of it, and strewed it about on the ground beside her. Now she had a servant who was industrious, and gathered together the bits of flax which were thrown away, cleaned them, [spun] them fine, and had a beautiful gown made out of them for herself. A young man had wooed the lazy girl, and the wedding was to take place. On the eve of the wedding, the industrious one was dancing merrily about in her pretty dress, and the bride said,—“Ah, how that girl does jump about, dressed in my odds and ends.” The bridegroom heard that, and asked the bride what she meant by it. Then she told him that the girl was wearing a dress [made] of the flax which she had thrown away. When the bridegroom heard that, and saw how idle she was, and how industrious the poor girl was, he gave her up and went to the other, and chose her as his wife.¹¹

Tip: Use quotation marks to punctuate the title of a short story, short poem, TV episode, or essay. Italicize or underline the title of a longer work, such as a book, movie, play, TV show, or collection of poems, stories, or essays.

- a. Summarize the tale “Odds and Ends” in one sentence.

In “Odds and Ends,” a bridegroom nearly marries a spoiled, lazy maiden, but marries her servant instead when he discovers that the hardworking servant made a dress out of discarded flax.

- b. State the main idea of the tale in one sentence.

Hard work and thrift, rather than beauty and idleness, receive a reward.

- c. How does the tale define goodness?

“Odds and Ends” defines goodness as working hard and making the best of your situation in life.

A. “The Star-Money,” a German Tale

There was once on a time a little girl whose father and mother were dead, and she was so poor that she no longer had any little room to live in, or bed to sleep in, and at last she had nothing else but the clothes she was wearing and a little bit of bread in her hand which some charitable soul had given her. She was, however, good and pious.

And as she was thus forsaken by all the world, she went forth into the open country, trusting in the good God. Then a poor man met her, who said, “Ah, give me something to eat, I am so hungry!” She reached him the whole of her piece of bread, and

11. The Brothers Grimm, “Odds and Ends,” in *Household Tales*, trans. Margaret Hunt (London: George Bell and Sons, 1884; Project Gutenberg, 2004), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/5314/5314-8.txt>.

said, “May God bless it to thy use,” and went onwards. Then came a child who moaned and said, “My head is so cold, give me something to cover it with.” So she took off her hood and gave it to him; and when she had walked a little farther, she met another child who had no jacket and was frozen with cold. Then she gave it her own; and a little farther on one begged for a frock, and she gave away that also. At length she got into a forest and it had already become dark, and there came yet another child, and asked for a little shirt, and the good little girl thought to herself, “It is a dark night and no one sees thee, thou canst very well give thy little shirt away,” and took it off, and gave away that also.

And as she so stood, and had not one single thing left, suddenly some stars from heaven fell down, and they were nothing else but hard smooth pieces of money, and although she had just given her little shirt away, she had a new one which was of the very finest linen. Then she gathered together the money into this, and was rich all the days of her life.¹²

a. Summarize the tale “The Star-Money” in one sentence.

Sample answer: In “The Star-Money,” a poor orphan girl wanders through the world giving away what little she possesses until she is rewarded by money from heaven.

b. State the main idea of the tale in one sentence.

Sample answers: Even when a person feels poor, she can still be generous.
Goodness and piety will be rewarded in the end.

c. How does the tale define goodness?

Sample answer: “The Star-Money” defines goodness as giving generously, even if it hurts.

B. “How the Wicked Sons Were Duped,” an Indian Tale

A very wealthy old man, imagining that he was on the point of death, sent for his sons and divided his property among them. However, he did not die for several years afterwards; and miserable years many of them were. Besides the weariness of old age, the old fellow had to bear with much abuse and cruelty from his sons. Wretched, selfish ingrates! Previously they vied with one another in trying to please their father, hoping thus to receive more money, but now they had received their patrimony,¹³ they cared

12. The Brothers Grimm, “The Star-Money,” in *Household Tales*, trans. Margaret Hunt (London: George Bell and Sons, 1884; Project Gutenberg, 2004), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/5314/5314-8.txt>.

13. patrimony: inheritance from one’s father

not how soon he left them—nay, the sooner the better, because he was only a needless trouble and expense. And they let the poor old man know what they felt.

One day he met a friend and related to him all his troubles. The friend sympathized very much with him, and promised to think over the matter, and call in a little while and tell him what to do. He did so; in a few days he visited the old man and put down four bags full of stones and gravel before him.

“Look here, friend,” said he. “Your sons will get to know of my coming here to-day, and will inquire about it. You must pretend that I came to discharge a long-standing debt with you, and that you are several thousands of rupees¹⁴ richer than you thought you were. Keep these bags in your own hands, and on no account let your sons get to them as long as you are alive. You will soon find them change their conduct towards you. Salaam.¹⁵ I will come again soon to see how you are getting on.”

When the young men got to hear of this further increase of wealth they began to be more attentive and pleasing to their father than ever before. And thus they continued to the day of the old man’s demise, when the bags were greedily opened, and found to contain only stones and gravel!¹⁶

a. Summarize the tale “How the Wicked Sons Were Duped” in three sentences.

— Sample answer: In “How the Wicked Sons Were Duped,” several wicked sons treat their father abusively after he gives them their inheritance. Seeing the old man in despair, a friend gives him four bags of stones and recommends that he pretend they are a repayment of a debt. By pretending to be rich again, the old man again receives the kind attention of his sons.

b. State the main idea of the tale in one sentence.

— Sample answers: It is unwise to give away one’s wealth before one is dead.
A parent may not even trust his own children to care for him when he is poor.

c. How does the tale define wickedness?

— Sample answer: “How the Wicked Sons Were Duped” defines wickedness as mistreating elders or one’s own parents.

14. rupee: the basic money unit of India, Pakistan, and Nepal

15. Salaam: a greeting and farewell that means “peace”

16. “How the Wicked Sons Were Duped,” in *Indian Fairy Tales*, ed. Joseph Jacobs (London: David Nutt, 1892; Project Gutenberg, 2003), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/7128/7128-h/7128-h.htm>.

C. **“The Old Man and His Grandson,” a German Tale**

There was once a very old man, whose eyes had become dim, his ears dull of hearing, his knees trembled, and when he sat at table he could hardly hold the spoon, and spilt the broth upon the table-cloth or let it run out of his mouth. His son and his son’s wife were disgusted at this, so the old grandfather at last had to sit in the corner behind the stove, and they gave him his food in an earthenware bowl, and not even enough of it. And he used to look towards the table with his eyes full of tears. Once, too, his trembling hands could not hold the bowl, and it fell to the ground and broke. The young wife scolded him, but he said nothing and only sighed. Then they bought him a wooden bowl for a few pennies, out of which he had to eat.

They were once sitting thus when the little grandson of four years old began to gather together some bits of wood upon the ground. “What are you doing there?” asked the father. “I am making a little trough,” answered the child, “for father and mother to eat out of when I am big.”

The man and his wife looked at each other for a while, and presently began to cry. Then they took the old grandfather to the table, and henceforth always let him eat with them, and likewise said nothing if he did spill a little of anything.¹⁷

a. Summarize the tale “The Old Man and His Grandson” in three sentences.

Sample answer: In “The Old Man and His Grandson,” an old man lives with his son and daughter-in-law. Disgusted by the old man’s inability to hold his bowl steady and by daily spills on the table, the younger couple seat him out of the way behind the stove. It’s only when the grandson, while playing, mimics the selfishness of the younger couple that the couple realize that they must treat the old man with kindness.

b. State the main idea of the tale in one sentence.

Sample answers: Treat others as you want yourself to be treated.
We can learn wisdom from people of all ages.

c. How does the tale define goodness?

Sample answer: “The Old Man and His Grandson” defines goodness as patience with weakness, and kindness toward others.

17. The Brothers Grimm, “The Old Man and His Grandson,” in *Household Tales*, trans. Margaret Hunt (London: George Bell and Sons, 1884; Project Gutenberg, 2004), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/5314/5314-8.txt>.

D. **“The Miraculous Cow,” a Filipino Tale**

There was once a farmer driving home from his farm in his cart. He had tied his cow to the back, as he was accustomed to do every evening on his way home. While he was going along the road, two boys saw him. They were Felipe and Ambrosio. Felipe whispered to Ambrosio, “Do you see the cow tied to the back of that cart? Well, if you will untie it, I will take it to our house.”

Ambrosio approached the cart slowly, and untied the cow. He handed the rope to Felipe, and then tied himself in the place of the animal.

“Come on, Ambrosio! Don’t be foolish! Come on with me!” whispered Felipe impatiently.

“No, leave me alone! Go home, and I will soon be there!” answered the cunning Ambrosio.

After a while the farmer happened to look back. What a surprise for him! He was frightened to find a boy instead of his cow tied to the cart. “Why are you there? Where is my cow?” he shouted furiously. “Rascal, give me my cow!”

“Oh, don’t be angry with me!” said Ambrosio. “Wait a minute, and I will tell you my story. Once, when I was a small boy, my mother became very angry with me. She cursed me, and suddenly I was transformed into a cow; and now I am changed back into my own shape. It is not my fault that you bought me: I could not tell you not to do so, for I could not speak at the time. Now, generous farmer, please give me my freedom! for I am very anxious to see my old home again.”

The farmer did not know what to do, for he was very sorry to lose his cow. When he reached home, he told his wife the story. Now, his wife was a kind-hearted woman; so, after thinking a few minutes, she said, “Husband, what can we do? We ought to set him free. It is by the great mercy of God that he has been restored to his former self.”

So the wily boy got off. He rejoined his friend, and they had a good laugh over the two simple folks.

The next day the farmer went to the market to buy a new cow and found his own cow for sale. He grieved at his own foolishness and vowed to thrash the boys if he ever saw them again.¹⁸

a. Summarize the tale “The Miraculous Cow” in two sentences.

Sample answer: In “The Miraculous Cow,” two boys steal a farmer’s cow from the back of his cart, and one of the boys tethers himself to the cart using the cow’s rope. The boy pretends that he is the cow, now turned back to his original form, and the farmer foolishly believes him, but after he lets the boy go, he finds his own cow for sale at the market.

18. Adapted from “The Miraculous Cow,” in *Filipino Popular Tales*, ed. Dean S. Fansler (Lancaster, PA: American Folklore Society, 1921; Project Gutenberg, 2008), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/8299/8299-h/8299-h.htm>.

b. State the main idea of the tale in one sentence.

Sample answers: A preposterous story should never be believed.
With cleverness it is easy to trick the simple-minded.

c. How does the tale define wickedness?

Sample answers: “The Miraculous Cow” defines wickedness as using one’s wits to fool kindhearted, simple folk.
“The Miraculous Cow” defines wickedness as foolishly believing impossible stories.

2. **AMPLIFICATION**—When we give readers a chance to enter more fully into an experience, they often become more open to our ideas. Amplification can do exactly that—help readers enter into an experience—by making a story richer with detail. Good rhetoric requires good storytelling.

The story in this exercise is a tale from China that warns the reader to treat people kindly, to protect them, and to avoid assuming the worst about them. You will see that this story, like some of the tales in the previous exercise, teaches about goodness by showing what goodness is not—by describing wickedness in action. After you read it over, rewrite the story in the space provided, adding dialogue and description that would enhance your audience’s enjoyment of the story and help them to better understand what you think the story is saying about goodness.

- You can use vivid, descriptive words to:
 - more fully describe the farmers
 - more fully describe the settings of the field and the temple
 - more fully describe the storm
- You can go into more detail about the wicked background of the farmers or help your audience better understand the “mind” of the lightning.
- You can use dialogue to:
 - give more details about the actions and motives of the farmers
 - enhance the personality and character of several of the farmers



“Who Was the Wicked Man?”, a Chinese Tale

Once upon a time there were ten farmers, who were crossing a field together. They were surprised by a heavy thunder-storm, and took refuge in a half-ruined temple. But the thunder drew ever nearer, and so great was the tumult that the air trembled about them, while the lightning flew around the temple in a continuous circle. The farmers were greatly frightened, and thought that there must be a wicked man among them, whom the lightning would strike. In order to find out who it might be, they agreed to hang their straw hats up before the door, and he whose hat was blown away was to yield himself up to his fate.

No sooner were the hats outside, than one of them was blown away, and the rest thrust its unfortunate owner out of doors without pity. But as soon as he had left the temple, the lightning ceased circling around and struck the temple with a crash, killing the remaining nine farmers.

The one whom the rest had thrust out had been the only good man among them, and for his sake the lightning had spared the temple. So the other nine had to pay for their hard-heartedness with their lives.¹⁹

Amplification:

Sample amplification:

Once upon a time there were ten farmers. As they sloshed across the rice fields together, they were suddenly caught in a storm with heavy rain and fearsome flashes of lightning. They ran for their lives and took refuge in the ruins of an old temple. As the thunder boomed louder and louder, nearer and nearer, they pressed their backs against the brick walls in an effort to stay dry under the half-collapsed roof. And then came a crash so loud, so earsplitting, that they felt the air shudder and the ground tremble beneath their feet.

“We will all surely die!” cried one of the farmers.

“What have we done to deserve this fate?” shrieked another.

Now, one of the farmers, a tall, bearded fellow with burly muscles, took leadership of the group. He shouted, “How foolish we are! We must sacrifice one of us to save the others. Surely the lightning god is angry with us for good reason. Perhaps we are sheltering an evildoer among us!” The tall man then urged the other farmers to hang their straw hats on a rafter in front of the broken-down door. “Whichever man has his hat blown away first, that is the man we shall send into the storm!”



19. *The Chinese Fairy Book*, ed. Dr. R. Wilhelm, trans. Frederick H. Martens (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1921; Project Gutenberg, 2009), <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/29939/29939-h/29939-h.htm>.

Only one farmer, a thin old man with gray hair, argued against the idea. "It would be cruel to send any man back into the storm," he said. "We must wait for the storm to pass."

The burly farmer made a fist and said, "You silly old coot! I'll knock your block off if you resist!"

Not all the farmers wanted to hang their hats on the rafter. It seemed like a desperate idea, but they were afraid of the burly farmer with the beard. They were afraid that if they appeared reluctant, they would be identified as the evildoer. It took another loud crash of thunder to send them all scurrying toward the door, and there they hung up their hats. The old man reluctantly waded across the muddy floor to the rafter and hung up his hat as well.

In less than a minute, a powerful gust of wind burst through the door. And whose hat did it lift off the hook? The old, gray-headed man's. It flew like a dart across the room.

"Aha!" gloated the burly farmer. "We might have known it was you, you old scoundrel. You wicked, selfish man! How dare you hide among us and try to get us killed? Get out in the storm. Now!"

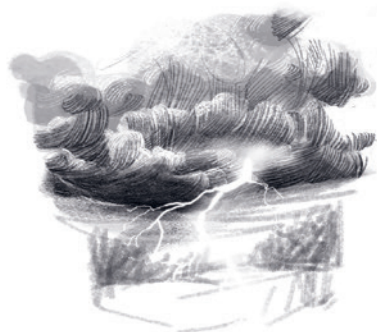
The old man looked to his comrades for help, but they all cowered against the dripping brick wall. A flash of lightning showed them all to be trembling and unwilling to say a word.

"Get out!" one of them said.

"Get out!" they all shouted in unison.

And so the old man picked up his hat and plodded out the door. The wind was fierce and threatened to knock him down. The rain struck hard and stung him all over. But when he was only thirty paces from the temple, a giant shaft of lightning hit its roof. The roof and all the walls caved in on top of the other farmers, killing them instantly, leaving only a smoking ruin.

In a short while, the sun came up on the rice fields and the birds began chirping once more. The old man kept walking, walking, walking. The lightning god had spared the only good man in the bunch. It was for the old farmer's sake that he had avoided the temple, but once the old man had departed, the lightning god had struck the temple with all of his might.



Lesson 1: Quintilian and the Classical Ideal: First Strive for Goodness

Tell It Back—Summary

Sample important ideas:

- Both Aristotle and Quintilian saw rhetoric as a good and useful skill for public discussions, although they acknowledged that it could be misused.
- Most people are not as good as they think they are, and recognizing this should motivate us to keep working at developing goodness.
- Becoming a good person is the study and challenge of a lifetime.

Talk About It—

1. I would want to be good even though it would be tempting to choose beauty or cleverness. Beauty doesn't last forever, and some beauties are really rotten to other people. Clever people are intelligent and can be wise, but cleverness without goodness can also be used hurtfully. If someone is truly good, he or she is always helpful and kind to other people.

Teachers of rhetoric care about a person's desire to be good because they believe that anyone who practices rhetoric must have this aspiration. If a person isn't working on self-improvement, he might do more harm than good in the use of rhetoric.

Teachers: You may find it useful to share the following sample answer with your students as well, to give them an idea of how the question might be answered by someone in a different stage of life. This is how the author of this series would answer the question:

When I was a young man, I wanted to be divinely beautiful so that I could find love. When I found love, I wanted to be dazzlingly clever so that I could win fame and fortune. Now that I'm older, I don't value fame or fortune all that much. Instead, I would like to be good so that young people, including my children, can see me as a role model and emulate my care and concern for others. The world needs people who are striving to be good more than it needs beautiful, famous, or wealthy people.

2. Narcissism undermines goodness by making selfishness a person's priority. A narcissist may use rhetoric to build power, wealth, or prestige, but not to help others or his society.

Because narcissists love to be the center of attention, they probably don't have much time to pay attention to the needs of others. All relationships require mutual care and attention to be healthy, and a narcissist who can't give to others will fast suck the life out of a relationship. Eventually the narcissist's friends will tire of always putting the narcissist at the center. And what happens when the friends of a narcissist stop giving him so much admiration? I'll bet the narcissist will dump those friends and move on to others who will admire him more,

and the cycle will start all over again. Every one of a narcissist's friendships are likely to be shallow because they don't last long.

3. Answers will vary. Topics might include abortion, sexual orientation, combat enlistment of women, doctor-assisted suicide, sex selection of children, religious freedom, human cloning, animal rights, and rights for robots with artificial intelligence. In many countries today, freedom of worship and freedom of political activism are forbidden. Many millions are forced to take unpopular stands for the sake of their consciences and they pay the price in persecution.

Notes
