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The **ART** of **COMPOSITION**

YEAR 2

Karen Glass

Your student is already fluent in narration, completing written narrations every week. Now your student's writing skills are ready to be honed with *The Art of Composition.*

The *Art of Composition* course guides your high school student to become an excellent writer, while still retaining his own unique personal voice. Your student will work independently, building on written narrations from other school subjects.

Great writing is an art. This four-year course's once-a-week, 30-minute lessons will guide your student to learn the art of communicating well with the written word. By the end of the course, your student will have a firm grasp of how to write with excellence and be prepared for writing assignments in college-level courses.

In Year 2, your student will advance to the next level of editing, explore essay building, and learn about audience, perspective, and formality in the craft of writing.

Set your student on a path to success in writing with *The Art of Composition*!

Simply
Charlotte Mason

THE ART OF COMPOSITION

Year 2

BY KAREN GLASS

The Art of Composition, Year 2

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CONTENTS

About The Art of Composition 5
To the Teacher, A General Introduction 7

Module 1: Level 2 Editing—Improve Your Sentences 11
Lesson 1: Definition of a Sentence 14
Lesson 2: Adding Modifiers 18
Lesson 3: Using Strong Verbs 22
Lesson 4: Using Verbs Effectively 27
Lesson 5: Using Strong Nouns 32
Lesson 6: Eliminating Weak Words 38
Lesson 7: Refining the Use of Modifiers 43
Lesson 8: Avoiding Clichés 49
Lesson 9: Arranging Words Well 53
Lesson 10: Understanding Word Relationships and Functions . . 59
Lesson 11: Editing Well 63
Lesson 12: Developing Sentence Rhythm 66
Module 1 Exam 70

Module 2: Introduction to Essay Building 71
Lesson 1: Introduction to Outlining 75
Lesson 2: Introduction to Paragraphs 81
Lesson 3: Writing Organized Paragraphs 87
Lesson 4: Creating an Outline from a Narration 92
Lesson 5: Writing Your First Essay 98
Lesson 6: Editing Your Essay Thoroughly 101
Lesson 7: Creating an Outline 105
Lesson 8: Writing Your Second Essay 110
Lesson 9: Editing Your Essay 112
Lesson 10: Creating an Outline 115
Lesson 11: Writing Your Third Essay 120

Lesson 12: Editing Your Essay 122
Module 2 Exam 125

Module 3: Developing Writing Craft 127
Lesson 1: Introduction to Style 130
Lesson 2: The Writer-Reader Relationship 134
Lesson 3: Thinking about Your Audience 137
Lesson 4: Understanding Point of View or Perspective 142
Lesson 5: Thinking about Tone 147
Lesson 6: Levels of Formality 151
Lesson 7: Refining Introductions 156
Lesson 8: Introduction to Narrative Style 160
Lesson 9: Introduction to Descriptive Style 166
Lesson 10: Metaphors and Similes 173
Lesson 11: Introduction to Expository Style 178
Lesson 12: Making Your Strongest Points 183
Module 3 Exam 189

Questions to Help Me Analyze a Sentence 193
Bibliography 195
Spelling Journal 197
Grammar Journal 199
Commonplace Journal 203

ABOUT THE ART OF COMPOSITION

The Art of Composition, Year 2, offers a full school year of composition studies.

- Complete one lesson per week.
- Each lesson should take about 30 minutes.
- The lessons are designed for the student to complete independently with parent or teacher supervision and discussion.
- The lessons are based on the student's written narrations from other school subjects with a focus on fine tuning and improving those written pieces.
- A grammar handbook will be helpful as the student completes the lessons; for example, *Write Right!* by Jan Venolia.

TO THE TEACHER, A GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The foundation of narration has given your student the ability to write—to get thoughts onto paper in the form of intelligible sentences. The transformation of thoughts and knowledge into words is a process. Writing is a *process*, and narration is the best method for allow that process to grow and develop naturally. A formal composition, however, is a *product*—the end result of thinking, writing, and editing—that may be read and understood by others. When a student narrates (either orally and in writing), the primary focus is on the process and its work in the mind of the thinker and writer. Used consistently, this process develops the ability to write fluently. Your student is able to get his or her thoughts into written sentences with ease.

As your student learns to produce formal compositions, the focus shifts from the mind of the writer to the potential reader. Most of the guidelines related to good writing grow out of the relationship between the writer and the reader. The reader needs the writing to be clear and understandable, and he wants the material to be enjoyable and interesting. Writing a composition means thinking both about the content of the paper and the experience the reader will have as he works through it.

Student writers need plenty of practice in this new venture—producing formal compositions rather than straightforward narrations. If you can find a reader for your student's finished compositions (in addition to yourself as the teacher), it will help grow your student's understanding of this important aspect of composition.

In Year 1 of The Art of Composition series, your student learned to edit his or her written work for mechanical errors and began to explore writing as a craft, which was a step towards writing for a reader. In this volume, your student will continue to build on that knowledge. As your student's writing skills develop, it is important to continue the practice of oral and written narration for daily work. Written narrations should be considered rough drafts, and there is no need to edit and correct each one. Your student will benefit from writing narrations in every subject area (science, literature, history, etc.), and you can select a variety of narrations to use in the lessons here.

Each module contains 12 lessons which should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. However, some of the longer writer projects might benefit from some additional writing (or editing) time, which you can schedule in one session or across several days.

In Module One, your student will gain practice in editing for improvement as well as correctness. This module focuses on individual sentences, and your student will explore different ways to improve a sentence that has already been written. When you read your student's edited and improved narrations, you will probably still see need for further improvement. However, perfection is not expected. You may occasionally discuss other potential improvements and ask your student for a second round of editing on the same paper. This is rarely required in the lessons, but it is always an option that you can use if you think your student can make his sentences even better.

In Module Two, your student will be introduced to the process of writing a formal paper—an essay. Your student will learn to write paragraphs that conform to conventional style and to use an existing written narration as the foundation for a complete essay. If your student needs help in this process, please offer assistance. The lessons in this module could be repeated as many times as you like, so if you think your student would benefit from additional practice, you can extend the time you spend on these lessons.

While a five-paragraph essay is an easy way to begin learning how to organize an essay, please don't allow this format to dominate your student's approach to writing. There are overly scripted and prescribed conventions that attempt to dictate the function of every sentence in a paragraph or an essay. That is not what your fluent narrator needs in order to learn composition. In these lessons, your student is given the structure of a five-paragraph essay merely as a framework for organizing the material in the essay. Once the framework and its purpose are understood, your student's work can be as long or as short as needed, and the number of paragraphs can be dictated by what your student has to say.

After some practice in writing full-length essays, your student will be introduced in Module Three to more advanced aspects of writing craft such as tone, perspective, and arrangement. The assignments in this module are a bridge between the narration-based essays in Module Two and the assigned topical essays you will find in Year 3. These are the first writing assignments that are not based on narrations your

student has already written. Rather, your student will be assigned to write—and edit—a short composition (a structured paragraph) based upon a topic sentence.

In addition to the assignments in each lesson, this book includes suggestions for creative narrations that can be done with any narration assignment during the week. There are also prompts to add various things to the commonplace pages at the end of the book (or a separate commonplace book if your student has one). These activities support your student writer's attention to the practice of writing, but they can be considered optional.

After your student has completed Year 2, he or she should be prepared for any kind of writing assignment that might be given. The ability to write the substance of a paper and then edit with a reader in mind are foundational skills that will serve your student well in many possible ventures.

MODULE 1

Level 2 Editing— Improve Your Sentences

Sentence craft and sentence appreciation are not trivial pursuits. —Stanley Fish

TO THE TEACHER

In this module, your student is going to continue to develop editing skills. In an earlier module, your student learned to edit for correctness, but now we'll be looking more closely at the craft of writing. What goes into a well-written sentence? Your student will learn to look at each sentence and ask *How can I make this sentence better?* There are many ways to improve sentences, and as your student develops this skill it will help refine his or her personal writing style. Each student is the judge of whether a change makes a sentence better, although you are entitled to your opinion as well, and your student will be encouraged to discuss his edits with you.

When you are looking at your student's work, and comparing the first draft to the edited one, be sure to appreciate the changes and improvements that have been made. You might feel that the paper could be improved further. It probably could be! But it is not necessary for your student to do that. This is a process, and your student is learning and growing as a writer. Improvement of a sentence, not over-all perfection, is the goal. If you offer suggestions, offer them as suggestions for future writing efforts.

This module instructs your student to correct any mechanical errors related to spelling, punctuation, capitalization, etc. Correcting these kinds of errors was addressed in Year 1, but if your student still makes

quite a few errors of this type and needs help correcting them, you might find the editing chart used in the earlier module helpful (chart can be found on page 191). However, if your student makes few errors or is able to find and correct them without help, there is no need to use the chart.

As your student builds the skill of improving sentences, you may find that both of you become more aware of the individual sentences you read in various places. Consider sharing any excellent sentence you find with your student and encourage your student to share sentences with you so that you can appreciate the craft of the writer together.

Creative Narration

Quite often, as younger narrators grow more skilled in writing, the usual practice of simply "telling back" what happened in a narration becomes boring. One way to break up the monotony and add interest to narration is to encourage creative narration. You can assign as many creative narrations as you like if your student enjoys them. There are several suggestions for creative narrations included throughout the course.

Encourage your student to give creative narration a try. However, if he doesn't want to narrate in the proposed way, feel free to skip the suggestions or substitute others.

Commonplace

As you and your student delve into the practice of editing and refining, your attention to the craft of writing will increase. Another way to develop an appreciation for well-written sentences is to keep a "commonplace book," or "book of mottoes," where examples of interesting writing or content are recorded. Your student will be prompted to look for examples of good writing and write them into the Commonplace section of this notebook, but the practice can also be encouraged by providing a separate, lovely notebook or journal that will become a keepsake.

TO THE STUDENT

In Year 1 of The Art of Composition series, you learned to edit your writing to correct errors. As you read over your writing, you

were asking yourself the question, *Is this sentence correct?* You were considering the mechanics of spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation. Part of the editing process is looking at each sentence in a piece of writing and asking not only *Is everything correct?* but also *How can I make this sentence better?* The focus of this module is to help you improve the sentences that you write.

When words are written down, we expect them to be read by someone. That reader needs the clearest, most interesting sentences that you can write. Good writing makes an impression on a reader. It makes the material more memorable. Reading good writing is an enjoyable experience. Readers take pleasure in writing that draws them into the author's world. A reader enjoys being able to see, to experience, to understand what a writer has written. A reader appreciates being able to follow a train of thought through clear sentences. You've had good and poor experiences as a reader yourself. As a writer, your goal is to help your reader have the best experience possible, even if it takes only a few minutes to read your short piece of writing.

As you work through the lessons in this module, you will discover various ways that you can make your sentences better. You will learn some of the general guidelines that well-written sentences usually follow. However, you will also find yourself paying more attention to the sentences that you read. Writers have their own styles. You will learn some general principles that will help you to improve the sentences that you write, but as the writer, you will be trying to refine and improve your own writing style.

No writer can write a polished final draft with the first effort. Good writing doesn't spring fully formed as you get your thoughts down in sentences for the first time. Your sentences are pliable; you can change almost any part of them—or all of the parts of them—while still preserving your meaning. But change alone isn't the goal; improvement is the goal.

No matter how well (or not so well) you already write, you can improve your writing. This improvement happens after that first draft is written, as you examine your sentences and their parts closely. After you have written *what* you want to say, you have time to think carefully about *how* you said it. You can find ways to improve almost every sentence or to be satisfied that your sentence is serving its purpose as it is. Let's dive in.

LESSON 1: *Definition of a Sentence*

If someone were to ask you what the primary unit of language is, you would probably be tempted to answer "words." Certainly, we would have no language without words, but in fact, words are not enough for meaningful communication. We have to put our words together in a relational way before they include meaning.

For example, suppose I asked you to write down the definition of the word *present*.

Definition of *present*: _____

No matter what you wrote down, I might say that you are wrong. Did you define it as a gift? I could tell you I meant "this moment in time." If you defined *present* as today, I might object that I was referring to the giving of an award. If you wrote that *present* was to proffer an honor, I might explain that no, a *present* is something you wrap up for a birthday. Believe it or not, there are other possibilities as well.

This is why words alone are not the primary unit of communication. They have to be placed into sentences and then meaning will emerge. *Sentences* are the primary unit of language.

Charlotte Mason defined a sentence for us in this way: "If we use words in such a way as to make sense we get a sentence." She also asserted that a student has "learned nearly all the grammar that is necessary when he knows that when we speak we use sentences and that a sentence makes sense" (*A Philosophy of Education*, p. 209).

That's quite a bold statement, and I hope you have learned more grammar than that, but don't let it get in the way of this fundamental understanding: A sentence is words put together so that they make sense.

Just for fun, write down a sentence from one of your recent narrations. It should be at least 10–12 words long:

_____

_____

Now, rewrite the words from your sentence, but place them in *alphabetical* order:

Is it still a sentence? Probably not. It's the same words, and they have been arranged in an orderly manner, but the meaning has been drained away, and if there is no meaning, there is no sentence.

What creates the meaning in a sentence? We have defined a sentence as "words put together so that they make sense" but why is ***The dog ran into the table and knocked over the lamp*** a sentence while ***and dog into knocked lamp over ran table the the the*** is definitely not? The second example contains the same words (in alphabetical order). Why is one meaningful but the other is not? Where does the meaning come from?

The magic that allows meaning to emerge from a collection of words and determines whether they produce a sentence is *relationships*. That's it. In order for a sentence to make sense, the words have to stand in clear relationship to each other. The study of all the ways in which it is possible for relationships to create meaning is what we call *grammar*, but it's all about the relationships. Those are the key.

You already know how to write meaningful sentences. Let's prove that by taking a collection of random words and writing one sentence that includes them all.

button enough hurry mountain yesterday

Adding your own thoughts as needed, use all these words in a single sentence:*

Try it again with another set of random words:

purple six exceeding communicate refrigerator

Try creating another sentence using the same words (a silly sentence is just fine as long as it's a *meaningful* silly sentence):

What did you have to do in order to create a meaningful sentence from the random words?

You had to imagine how the words might relate to each other, and your sentences were constructed to make those relationships clear. You can write sentences.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Choose one of your recent narrations to edit. Read through it aloud and correct any mechanical errors (spelling, grammar, punctuation) that you discover. Some mistakes can be seen, while others can be heard, so read aloud and use your eyes and your ears to make corrections.

   At the end of the book (pages 197–201), you will find pages where you can make note of any spelling corrections as well as grammar or punctuation guidelines that you might want to refer to. Use the pages to create the reminders that you need to help you make sure your sentences are correct.

2. Make sure your narration has a definite introduction and conclusion.

3. Read your narration aloud again, sentence by sentence. Does each sentence that you have written make sense? If one of your sentences does not make sense, try to discover why it doesn't. Rewrite it so that it does make sense. We will be exploring many ways that you can improve the sentences you write, but if every sentence that you have written makes sense, you are already intuitively using grammar to create important relationships between the words in your writing.

4. Read through your narration one more time as a whole to make sure it flows well.

5. Create an error-free final draft of your narration, including any changes you made to your sentences.

To think about or discuss with your teacher:

- Why is it so important to know that a sentence is words put together so that they make sense?
- What creates the meaning in sentences?
- Why do you think this is so? Think about what you had to do to create sentences with the random words provided.

*Here's one possibility: *The mountain looked so inviting yesterday that I couldn't hurry quickly enough to fasten each button and get out to the ski slopes.*