Simply Charlotte Mason presents

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

YEAR 3

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 3, your student will explore advanced writing and editing skills for formal and informal essays as well as the creative writing process.

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

Simply
Charlotte Mason

THE ART OF COMPOSITION

Year 3

BY KAREN GLASS

The Art of Composition, Year 3

ISBN 978-1-61634-775-8 printed
ISBN 978-1-61634-776-5 electronic download

Published by
Simply Charlotte Mason, LLC
930 New Hope Road #11-892
Lawrenceville, Georgia 30045
simplycharlottemason.com

Printed in the U.S.A.

CONTENTS

ABOUT THE ART OF COMPOSITION

The Art of Composition, Year 3, 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

If your student has worked through Years 1 and 2 of The Art of Composition series, he should be ready to go deeper into the writing process. This book will introduce your student to more advanced concepts related to writing while assigning writing projects appropriate for a student writer. The lessons here will continue to provide a framework for making formal composition a natural extension of narration.

While your student is developing the ability to produce formal compositions, the consistent practice of oral and written narration should not be neglected. Narration provides an important foundation for thinking and writing skills, even at the high school level. Written narrations do not need to be edited or corrected. They should be considered first drafts in which content is more important than form.

If your student still makes many mechanical errors (spelling, grammar, punctuation) in written narrations, you may want to consider asking for level-one editing on one or two narrations each week in addition to the work in these composition lessons. The purpose of requiring corrections would be to encourage your student to make fewer errors in the first place; however, this may not be possible for every student. You will have to make a judgment call as to whether some additional level-one editing practice will help your student. Errors in first drafts are irrelevant if students are able to correct them and create a clean final draft when required.

If your student would like to keep a record of common spelling challenges or grammar guidelines that he would like to keep handy, he may want to start a notebook for those records. If he used the Spelling and Grammar journals in Years 1 and 2 of The Art of Composition, he can start with what he recorded there for his guide.

Narration has laid the foundation for your student to be able to write because he can say what he wants to say in written sentences. He has learned how to present his writing as a formal composition. In this book, your student is going to deepen his understanding of the difference between writing, which is a *process*, and composition, which is a *product*. Your student will be given the opportunity to experiment with the writing process and explore his own preferred

writing style. There is more than one path to the final product—a polished composition.

The lessons frequently encourage your student to discuss the writing process with you. In one sense, the discussion questions prompt him to narrate about some part of that process. Your task as the teacher is to listen rather than to provide answers. If you are uncertain about your ability to give your student meaningful feedback about the written compositions, consider having another person read the final drafts and offer suggestions for improvement. This kind of personal attention is extremely valuable because the advice is specific to your student's own writing.

However, you do not have to be a writing expert to provide valuable suggestions to help your student improve. If you can read your student's writing and offer one practical suggestion for how it could be a little better, that is sufficient. Too many suggestions would be overwhelming and unhelpful. If you can tell your student things like "this part seems unclear to me" or "you've got really long sentences here that are hard to follow—maybe break some of them into shorter sentences," that is the kind of feedback that will help him to improve. One suggestion per project (two at the most) is enough. There may be many things that could use improvement, but a student writer will benefit from focusing on one thing at a time.

You might wonder about grading the essays your student writes, but grading writing is a very subjective activity. A teacher who reads many student essays has some sense of what an average student paper is like and can assess when a student has done better than average or is performing below average. Without that perspective, it is not possible to grade fairly. If your student is creating final drafts that are error free and that make sense when you read them, you should consider that *A*-level work. If a few mechanical errors remain in the final draft (spelling, punctuation, etc.), they may be noted, but if the composition makes sense when you read it, it is still an *A* paper. You might call it *A minus* if there are more than two or three errors. Any student capable of completing the assignments in this book is writing well. That doesn't mean there isn't room for improvement. Even good writers can continue to learn and grow into better writers.

Modules 1 and 2 require your student to think, write, and edit at an advanced level. The assignments in those modules can be linked to the books your student is reading for school. Your student will use his narration and thinking skills in the process of writing and

editing traditional compositions. Module 3, on the other hand, is an introduction to creative writing and encourages your student to use his imagination to experiment and play with words. The assignments are intended to be enjoyable. You could treat the lessons in this book with some flexibility, and break up the more serious lessons in Modules 1 and 2 with some of the lighter lessons in Module 3.

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.

Charlotte Mason's method of narration provides a stronger foundation for good writing than any writing curriculum. That foundation has helped your student to grow naturally into a fluent writer. The modules in this volume will help your fluent narrator to think deeply about writing as a craft while experimenting with the writing process. Your student's ability to communicate well in writing is a skill that will be welcome in whatever path he chooses to follow in the future.

MODULE 1

Developing Advanced Writing Skills

The basis of all writing is thinking. —William Edward Mead

TO THE TEACHER

This module assumes that your student has had some prior experience writing essays and is familiar with outlines and paragraphs. In the 12 lessons of this module, your student will write 6 essays that will deepen his understanding of the relationship between writing and thinking. The lessons will encourage your student to pay closer attention to the organization and style of writing. Although your student will be spending some time writing and editing compositions, the practice of daily oral and written narrations (which need not be corrected) should continue. These compositions are an extension of narration, but not a replacement for it. Consistent use of narration is an important part of developing thinking and writing skills.

Most of the assigned essays can be integrated with the books your student is reading for school. You may want to look at the writing assignments in lessons 1, 4, 6, 8, and 10 and give your input about the writing topic. You should also feel free to adjust the assigned word count for each essay if it seems appropriate. The lessons encourage your student to write short essays of 300–500 words with one longer assignment of 500–750 words. If your student is a strong writer and you want to increase the word count, you can do that. If your student is a struggling writer and you want to allow shorter compositions, that would be acceptable as well.

One of the things your student will be working on in this module is learning to ask questions about a topic in order to narrow it down.

A focused topic, rather than something very broad or general, is important for a short paper. Some samples are provided, but your student may need help with this process. There are no formulaic questions that will serve for every situation. If your student asks for help narrowing a topic, the questions must be based upon the material itself. Almost any questions that focus on specific examples or details will help. Asking some kind of questions is more important than trying to find the perfect questions. If you need to help your student, work together to ask questions—any kind of questions. Let one question lead to the next, and a focused topic will emerge. Your student should be able to cover the topic thoroughly within the assigned word count.

If your student submits a composition that still seems more like a rough draft than a polished final draft or that does not make sense when you read it, send it back for another round of editing. It is more helpful to continue editing and refining one paper until it is well done than to move on to other projects. If your student struggles to write papers from the assignments here, consider using the more guided assignments (found in Year 2) which are built on existing narrations.

TO THE STUDENT

Narration is the practice of retelling in your own words what you have read and heard. You are comfortable and familiar with the process. You can narrate orally, and you have grown your narration skills in writing so that you can write easily and produce a formal composition when you need to.

By now, you know that narration is not a process that happens apart from thinking. You cannot narrate by rote because it is not simply a matter of memory work. You must remember, of course, but you also use your judgement when you choose what to include in your narration and what can be left out. You use your reason to order the material and present it coherently. Narration is a concrete expression of your own thoughts about the material you have heard or read.

When you write your narrations, your thoughts take shape and crystallize as written sentences. The most important thing at this stage is the content or subject matter of your material. We call the first draft a *rough draft*, but in some ways it is also the most important draft because it gives form to your thoughts and ideas. In the earlier

volumes of The Art of Composition series, you learned how to turn your narrations into more polished compositions, and that is an important skill that you can continue to develop. However, editing and refining your sentences is no substitute for good subject matter. There isn't much point in saying nothing of importance in an elegant way. A first draft needs to be refined and polished before it is ready for the eyes of a reader, but unless you have something of substance to polish, the final result may be disappointing.

Because writing and thinking are part of the same process, the assignments in this module will be related to books that you are reading for school, but they will not be simple narrations. You will have the opportunity to think about what you are learning and write essays that feature your thoughts and perspective about the subjects at hand.

You may remember that there are four general styles of writing: narrative, descriptive, expository, and persuasive. These general styles can be modified by tone, audience, and other factors that are individual for each writer and composition.

- A narrative tells the reader what happened.
- A description helps the reader to see something.
- An exposition explains something to the reader.
- A persuasive composition tries to convince the reader.

Because a composition is a sort of conversation between the writer and the reader, these general styles help to clarify the purpose for a piece of writing. Longer compositions may include more than one general style, but short compositions are most effective when they are limited to a single style.

The composition assignments in this module will deepen your understanding of the relationship between writing and thinking and allow you to explore some of the general writing styles at a deeper level.

LESSON 1: *Writing and Thinking—Freewriting*

Have you ever heard of freewriting? This is a writing technique in which you just write without stopping for a designated amount of time (usually not very long). You don't worry about spelling, grammar, or organization—you just write about a given topic and turn your thoughts into words and sentences. Because sentences have to make sense, freewriting doesn't mean creating nonsense. You try to write steadily in order to capture your thoughts. Freewriting is an exercise that allows the relationship between thinking and writing to take center stage while other aspects of writing are on hold for a bit.

To choose a topic for a freewriting exercise, gather as many of your school books together as you can (just the ones you can locate quickly). You are going to choose one word (maybe two, if necessary) from one title as the topic for your freewriting venture, so just look at the titles.

Maybe some of the titles include names of people or places. Maybe some of the titles include abstract words like *influence*, *hope*, *travel*, or *art*. You can use any topic as the subject for your freewriting exercise, but take a few moments to think about your word and be sure that you have something you can say about it. Because you will be expressing your own thoughts, any word—concrete or abstract—can be used for this assignment.

Look at your titles and pick a word.

Your topic: _____

ASSIGNMENT

Set a timer for 10 or 15 minutes. Give yourself 10 minutes if you'll be typing and 15 minutes if you'll be handwriting. Don't worry about organization, grammar, spelling, or any other formalities associated with writing. Write as steadily as you can. Don't stop! You don't have to write quickly, but try to write as quickly as you are able to form your thoughts about your chosen word. Aim to write about 300 words on your topic. If you can't write that much, get as close as

you can in the time allowed. If you reach 300 words before time is finished, you can stop there or keep going.

Set your freewriting exercise aside for the next lesson.

To think about or discuss with your teacher:

What were your thoughts about the freewriting experiment? Did you notice a connection between writing and thinking? Did you write something that surprised you—something that you hadn't planned to write when you chose your topic? If you struggled to write steadily about the topic you chose, what did you learn about choosing a topic for writing? Did you have difficulty writing because you had difficulty thinking about your topic? What would you do differently if you were to repeat this exercise?