

# ANCIENT HISTORY-BASED WRITING LESSONS

IN  
STRUCTURE & STYLE  
BY LORI VERSTEGEN

## STUDENT BOOK

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*Civil War Era to the Present Day*

Ancient History-Based Writing Lessons

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## INTRODUCTION

This book teaches many elements of style, including most of those in the IEW syllabus. For your convenience, the chart below gives the page that introduces each of these elements.

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The lessons in this book are designed to teach structure and style in writing. As they move through Ancient World History themes, the lessons incrementally introduce and review most of the models of structure and elements of style found in the Institute for Excellence in Writing's *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style*. Instructions are directed to the student, but teachers should read over them with their students and help as necessary, especially with outlining and brainstorming. It is assumed that teachers have attended IEW's Basic Seminar, either live or via DVD, and own the seminar workbook. Before each new unit, it would be helpful for the teacher to review the appropriate information in that workbook. In addition, the *Ancient History-Based Writing Lessons Teacher's Manual* gives detailed instructions for teaching each of the lessons.

## STUDENT BOOK COMPONENTS

This book has three sections:

1. *The Lesson Pages*: This is the majority of the text. It contains the instructions, source texts, worksheets, and checklists needed for each lesson.
2. *The Appendix*: This section begins with a chart of stylistic techniques taught throughout the course. It also contains many lists of great words—quality adjectives, verbs, and -ly words, for example—that can replace banned words. It ends with a chart of proofreading marks. *Students will want to refer to this section often, so tab it.*
3. *Vocabulary Cards*: This section begins on page 157. Students will be instructed to cut out one set of cards each lesson. When they do so, they are to punch a hole in the top right corner of each and place them on a metal book ring for easy reference. The students will be expected to include some vocabulary words in each composition they write. They will also be quizzed over the words periodically. (Quizzes are in the Teacher's Manual.) The goal is that these words will become part of each student's natural writing vocabulary.

## A PERSONAL BOOK OF ANCIENT HISTORY

Students should polish and illustrate each of their final drafts. At the end of the year, they will have a collection of a variety of types of compositions that move through major themes in Ancient World History. These can be bound into a book that they can be proud of. For this reason, students should have a folder specifically designated for storing their *polished final drafts*.

## ADAPTING TO DIFFERENT GRADE LEVELS

Lessons are written so that students may easily move through them at their own pace. In general, *Level A students* (3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grade) should write only one paragraph per week. For this reason, lessons are broken into their individual paragraphs or sections. *Level B students* (6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade) should be able to complete an entire lesson of up to three paragraphs per week.

## ***POETRY: The Ancient World***

### LESSON 1 QUALITY ADJECTIVES and ALLITERATION

In this book you will learn many ways to make your writing more interesting and more enjoyable to read. You will learn how to write with structure and with style. The appendix of this book contains charts that begin on page 150 that you will want to refer to often. You should tab this page. It is entitled *Stylistic Techniques*. Throughout this course you will learn each of the elements of style on this page.

What is style? In relation to writing, *style* simply means *how* you express your ideas. Have you ever noticed when you read quality literature that it is not written in the same way you would talk to someone? Written language is usually fancier than spoken language. The words are more sophisticated and there is more description. We say that written language is often “dressed-up.” That is why on the Stylistic Techniques page you see a section labeled “Dress-ups.” You are going to learn how to dress-up your writing using the elements listed there.

#### QUALITY ADJECTIVES

The “dress-up” you will practice in this lesson is the *quality adjective*. An adjective is a word that describes a noun, which is a word for a person, place, or thing. To add a quality adjective to your writing, you first find a noun, then, describe it. Try adding adjectives to the following sentence. Do they make it more interesting to read?

The \_\_\_\_\_ Garden of Eden provided \_\_\_\_\_ food.

Using descriptive words like adjectives makes your writing more interesting; however, there are many adjectives that are either overused or boring. You do not want to use these. Look at the sentences below. Which have boring adjectives and which do you think have quality adjectives? Which are more interesting sentences?

The big pyramids were interesting.

The towering pyramids were enthraling.

The Romans were good warriors.

The Romans were unrivaled warriors.

On page 151 you will see a list of the adjectives that you may not use in this class—the *Banned Adjectives*. They are *good, bad, pretty, ugly, nice, mean, big, and a lot*. When you write, be sure *not* to use these words or words like them. When you are tempted to use one of them, use a thesaurus to help you replace it with a stronger adjective. An excellent thesaurus is *The Synonym Finder* by Rodale. You can also find a helpful list of substitute words for the banned adjectives in the Appendix on page 152.

## ALLITERATION

In this lesson you are going to write a poem that will help you practice using quality adjectives. To make your poem even more “poetic,” you can also use one of the “Decorations” on your Stylistic Techniques page—alliteration. Alliteration is simply two or more words used close together that begin with the same sound. Using alliteration makes writing more poetic and more pleasing to the ear—as long as it is not overused. Can you find some in the sample poem on page 10?

### THE ASSIGNMENT

1. Cut out and learn the vocabulary words for Lesson 1. Put them on a metal book ring.

2. Use page 9 to help you think of several quality adjectives that might work in the model poem below. Choose one or two for each blank in the poem. Try to include some alliteration, but not in every line. You may make changes to the model and add phrases to each line if you like. (See the sample on page 10.) Copy your poem onto another piece of paper. Add pictures.

### *The Ancient World*

**Mesopotamia**, with two \_\_\_\_\_ rivers

And \_\_\_\_\_ ziggurats

**Egypt**, with \_\_\_\_\_ pharaohs

And \_\_\_\_\_ pyramids

**Israel**, with God’s \_\_\_\_\_ law

And the \_\_\_\_\_ temple

**Babylon**, with the \_\_\_\_\_ Ishtar Gate

And the \_\_\_\_\_ Hanging Gardens

**Greece**, with \_\_\_\_\_ gods

And \_\_\_\_\_ athletes (or Olympics)

**Rome**, with \_\_\_\_\_ emperors

And \_\_\_\_\_ armies

**The Ancient World,**

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_

## BRAINSTORMING QUALITY ADJECTIVES

Write several adjectives that would describe each of the nouns in the model poem.

<b><u>rivers</u></b>  _____  _____  _____  _____  _____	<b><u>ziggurats</u></b>  _____  _____  _____  _____  _____	<b><u>pharaohs</u></b>  _____  _____  _____  _____  _____	<b><u>pyramids</u></b>  _____  _____  _____  _____  _____
<b><u>the law</u></b>  _____  _____  _____  _____  _____	<b><u>temple</u></b>  _____  _____  _____  _____  _____	<b><u>Ishtar Gate</u></b>  _____  _____  _____  _____  _____	<b><u>Hanging Gardens</u></b>  _____  _____  _____  _____  _____
<b><u>gods</u></b>  _____  _____  _____  _____  _____	<b><u>athletes (or Olympics)</u></b>  _____  _____  _____  _____  _____	<b><u>emperors</u></b>  _____  _____  _____  _____  _____	<b><u>armies</u></b>  _____  _____  _____  _____  _____

Note: Brainstorm and write two verses each day. On day 4, let a parent proofread your work. Then, write a final draft. Don't forget the closing two lines.

## ***Sample Poem***

*(Written by a 6<sup>th</sup> grade student who chose to add lines and phrases for rhyme. This was not required.)*

# The Ancient World

Sumer, with fast, furious rivers nourishing the land,  
Vast, beautiful gardens which were picked by hand,  
Jumbo, zigzag ziggurats planted in the sand.

Egypt, with harsh, hardhearted Pharaohs making servants pay,  
Tops of towering pyramids seen for miles away,  
The flourishing, flowing Nile, the only waterway.

Israel, with God's perfect law engraved in stone,  
A holy, golden temple from which God's glory shone.

Greece, with untrustworthy gods fashioned from stone,  
Hard-working athletes desiring the Olympic throne,  
Ingenious philosophers contemplating the unknown.

Rome, with prideful emperors giving strict commands,  
Courageous, powerful armies conquering many lands,  
Ruthless, desperate gladiators fighting hand-to-hand.

The Ancient World,  
Intriguing, brutal, and grand.

## ***SUMMARIZING REFERENCES: The Pyramids***

### LESSON 6 TOPIC SENTENCES AND CLINCHERS

In this lesson you will work on structuring one paragraph for a three-paragraph report about the wonders of Ancient Egypt. In this report, as in any report, every paragraph must have a clear topic. That means it must be about only one particular aspect of the subject. Even though there are many wonders of Ancient Egypt, the paragraph you will write in this lesson will focus on only the pyramids.

At the beginning of a paragraph you should let your reader know what the topic is. You do this by beginning each paragraph with a *topic sentence*. A topic sentence should not say anything like, “In this paragraph I will tell you about...” or “The topic of this paragraph is...” It should simply make a general statement about the topic. Look at the sample paragraph below. Notice how the first sentence lets you know what the rest of the paragraph is about. What is the topic of this paragraph?

*Ancient Egypt* was *ruled* by *kings* called *pharaohs*. They were believed to be descendents of the sun-god and to have the spirit of the hawk-god, Horus. The people could not speak directly about their king-god, so they spoke of the palace as having done something. “Pharaoh” means “great house.” Pharaohs wore a double crown to symbolize that their reign extended to both upper and lower Egypt, united by Menes. These *monarchs ruled* the *land* with absolute power.

It is also a good technique to end a paragraph by reminding the reader again of the topic. You will do this by repeating or reflecting (using words that mean the same thing) two to three key words from the topic sentence in the last sentence. We will call this last sentence the *clincher*.

In the above paragraph which word from the topic sentence was repeated in the clincher?  
*ruled*

Which words were reflected?  
*Ancient Egypt (land), kings and pharaohs (monarchs)*

### TAKING NOTES

The topic of your paragraph this week is the pyramids. The source text is three paragraphs long, so you will not be able to include all of the information. You will have to choose no more than seven of the facts that you think are the most interesting or the most important. Ignore the rest. You cannot write everything there is to know about pyramids in one paragraph. Follow the directions on the following page.

## THE ASSIGNMENT

1. Read the source text on the next page. On a separate sheet of paper, make an outline like the one below. On the first line write key words that will help you write a sentence about pyramids.

2. Next look for *no more than seven* interesting facts about pyramids. To help you remember each fact (not sentence) you choose, try to write no more than three key words on one line of the blank outline. As before, you do not have to count abbreviations, symbols, and numbers as words. If you need a fourth word once in a while, that's ok, but try to limit yourself to three. Only one paragraph of your report can be about pyramids, but the source text has three, so you are going to have to choose your facts carefully. (You can look at the sample outline and paragraph on page 36 for help, but do not copy the outline. Choose the things *you* think are most interesting or important.)

3. Use your key word outline to help you write a rough draft paragraph about pyramids. Be sure to start your paragraph with a topic sentence that lets your reader know that this paragraph will be about pyramids; however, *do not say* anything like, "In this paragraph..." or "This report is about..."

4. After you have written from your notes, be sure to end your paragraph with a sentence that reminds your reader of the topic. To do this, repeat or reflect 2–3 key words from the topic sentence in your last sentence. We call this sentence the clincher.

5. Highlight the words in the topic sentence and clincher that repeat or reflect the same ideas. Be sure you have used all the dress-ups and openers on the checklist on page 37.

6. Cut out and learn the vocabulary words for Lesson 6. Review all.

### KEY WORD OUTLINE

I. Topic Sentence: *(Say something about the pyramids)* \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_

Clincher idea: (Reflect key words from topic sentence about pyramids)

\_\_\_\_\_

## Pyramids

Ancient Egypt is known for its pyramids. For thousands of years people have marveled at the size and splendor of these magnificent structures. In fact, the Great Pyramid in Giza is one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. It is 450 feet tall with a base of 756 feet on each side. It contains over 2 million stone bricks, each weighing more than 22 tons! These giant monuments were built as tombs for pharaohs, queens, and nobles. The pyramids housed and protected their mummified bodies and all of their possessions to be used in the afterlife. They were majestic monuments filled with treasure!

All Egyptian pyramids were built on the west bank of the Nile in the desert. The base of a pyramid might be square or triangular, but the sides were always triangular. It is believed that it took over 20 years for 100,000 men to build just one pyramid. They used ropes, sledges, levers, and ramps to move the huge bricks, but even today no one fully understands how they accomplished such a feat with such precision. They rise above the desert as a testimony to the brilliance of the Ancient Egyptian civilization.

The inside of a pyramid was intriguing. The entrances to most pyramids were hidden on the pyramid's north side. There were many passageways and chambers inside. The actual burial chamber might be inside or underground. Builders did everything they could to keep robbers away. They wrote curses on the wall and built hidden doors, dead-end passages, and false chambers. Despite their efforts, most pyramids were robbed. But while the treasures inside are gone, we still have more than 30 pyramids standing in Egypt as a reminder of their great civilization.

## Sample

### KEY WORD OUTLINE

I. T.S. PYRAMIDS, Egypt, known

1. tombs, pharaohs, nobles
2. protected, mummified, treasures
3. 20 yrs, 100,000 men, build 1
4. today, ~~understand~~ precision
5. inside: passageways, bur chamber
6. rob, hidden, □, dead-ends
7. false chamb., curses, walls

Clincher idea: today, > 30 Egypt, monuments

**Here is a paragraph written from the above outline:**

Everyone knows that there are pyramids in Egypt. But did you know that these gigantic structures were tombs for pharaohs and nobles who died? In fact, they were built to protect their mummified bodies and the treasures they were buried with for use in the afterlife. It is believed that it took 100,000 men 20 years to erect just one pyramid. Because they were built so precisely, and without modern machines, we still do not understand how they were able to do it. Usually, inside a pyramid there were passageways and the burial chamber. To keep robbers from taking the treasures, there were also hidden doors, dead-ends, false chambers, and curses written on the walls. But unfortunately, most were robbed. Today there are more than 30 of these fascinating monuments standing in Egypt to remind us of their great civilization.

## ROUGH DRAFT CHECKLIST (Pyramids)

CLEAR TOPIC SENTENCE (*Highlight key words that tell the topic*) \_\_\_\_\_

DRESS-UPS (Underline & indicate in Right Margin)

1 strong verb \_\_\_\_\_

1 quality adj \_\_\_\_\_

1 -ly word \_\_\_\_\_

Vocabulary word \_\_\_\_\_

SENTENCE OPENERS (Number in Left margin)

#3 (-ly) \_\_\_\_\_

#6 (vss) \_\_\_\_\_

CLEAR CLINCHER (*Highlight words from topic sentence*) \_\_\_\_\_

Extra Credit: Alliteration \_\_\_\_\_

No banned words (Including “you” and “I”) \_\_\_\_\_

Note: When writing reports, do not say “I” or “you.”

*Incorrect:* You would be amazed at the pyramids.

*Better:* People have been amazed by the pyramids for centuries.

*Incorrect:* I think pyramids are fascinating.

*Better:* Pyramids are fascinating.

*Exception:* You may use “you” when you ask a question directed to your reader.  
For example: *Have you ever wondered how the Egyptians built the pyramids?*

# VOCABULARY CARDS

There is a sheet of four cards for most of the lessons. The last sheet contains blank cards. It is recommended that you copy this several times, so students can make their own cards when they find words they like. Each lesson, students will be instructed to cut out one set of cards, hole-punch the top right corner of each, and place them on a metal book ring for easy reference. A few vocabulary words are required to be used in each composition. Students may use any of the words, even from lessons they have not yet had, for this purpose. However, do not let them cut out future words because if they do, they will not know which words to study for quizzes. You will find that many students enjoy the challenge of using as many of the words as they can in their writing, especially if you offer extra credit for extra words. For your convenience, the following list shows which words go with which lesson. Quizzes are cumulative and cover all the words listed above them.

Lesson 1	radiant, fashioned, serpentine, towering
Lesson 2	streak, bellow, quake, plead
Lesson 3	ascend, descend, indefinite, colossal
Lesson 4	contrary, validate, depict, corrupt
	QUIZ 1
Lesson 5	wail, devour, presently, despair
Lesson 6	baffling, monument, splendor, enigma
Lesson 7a	fanciful, erode, resemble, adorned
Lesson 7b	encase, neglect, deplete, extract
	QUIZ 2
Lesson 9	ruthless, irate, devastating, chide
Lesson 11	brood, captor, feat, emerge
Lesson 12	defy, voraciously, sinister, petrified
	QUIZ 3
Lesson 13	tantalize, fetter, fortuitous, vivacious
Lesson 14	cease, prestigious, deftly, burly
Lesson 15	profusely, awe, explicit, evolve
	QUIZ 4
Lesson 19	console, enmity, falter, bleak
	FINAL TEST