

Classical Rhetoric through Structure and Style

Writing Lessons Based on the Progymnasmata

Adam Muller

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ISBN: 978-0-9779860-8-8

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Published by
Institute for Excellence in Writing, Inc.
P.O. Box 6065, Atascadero, CA 93423
1 (800) 856-5815
www.excellenceinwriting.com

Contents

Introduction	5
Unit I: Note Taking	
Lesson 1: Chreia of Socrates and Lincoln	7
Lesson 2: Pericles	9
Unit II: Writing Proverbs and Fables from Notes	
Lesson 3: The Heedless Man at the Gates	11
Lesson 4: “The Man Who Dined on Turnips” and “Man Enough for the Job”	15
Lesson 5: A Truth Speaker	19
Unit III: Narratio	
Lesson 6: Thomas Carlyle	25
Lesson 7: Odysseus and Polyphemus	28
Lesson 8: Theseus and Minos	31
Lesson 9: Chanticleer and the Fox	35
Lesson 10: The Slave and the Lion	39
Unit IV: Encomium and Vituperation	
Lesson 11: King Solomon on Wisdom	41
Lesson 12: John of Gaunt’s Encomium to England	45
Lesson 13: Hannibal’s Monologue	50
Lesson 1-13 Review	
The Gettysburg Address	53
Unit V: Description	
Lesson 14: Coriolanus	57
Lesson 15: The Story of Meleager	61
Lesson 16: Beowulf	66
Lesson 17: The Shield of Achilles	70
Unit VI: Comparison	
Lesson 18: The Founding of Rome	75
Lesson 19: Helen of Troy	81
Lesson 20: Creation	85
Unit VII: Impersonation	
Lesson 21: Odysseus	89
Lesson 22: Coriolanus	94
Lesson 23: Orpheus and Eurydice	95
Lesson 24: Chiron	98
Learning the Rhetorical Analysis: Sonnet 65	100
Unit VIII: Thesis, Confirmation, and Refutation	
Lesson 25: King Solomon on Wisdom	101
Lesson 26: Hamlet	103
Lesson 27: The Quality of Mercy	107
Lesson 28: Helen of Troy	110
Unit IX: Formal Critique	
Lesson 29: Return to Meleager	113
Lesson 30: St. Crispin’s Day Speech	116
Lesson 31: Mars Hill Appeal	119
Answer Key	<i>i - ix</i>

Dedication

For my beautiful wife, Annie

Acknowledgements

I must first thank Andrew Pudewa, whose project this is. “Progymnasmata-based Writing Lessons” is but one facet of the *Structure and Style* method he has perfected. Also, I cannot thank Dan Weber enough for his encouragement and skilled management of this project. I would also like to express my gratitude to Felipe Miranda for his help with the pictures in Unit V.

I am especially indebted to Professor Scott Crider, University of Dallas, for his expert instruction in classical rhetoric. He is a model of generosity in the classroom, and he teaches with an unparalleled sense of clarity and precision.

Introduction

To the Student...

These lessons are designed to help you strengthen your composition skills using classical readings from the Western tradition. I have tried to choose stories that are interesting and well known.

Almost every lesson has an excerpt from a classical source for you to read before you start your assignments. After you have read the passages for the lesson, do the assignments in the order that they appear. Each lesson builds upon the previous ones, as the check sheets clearly show. These check sheets are intended to be guides. Use them to remind yourself of the skills you have already learned and to make sure that you are incorporating new skills into your compositions.

Some of the later lessons will seem to skip a step in the assignment section. For instance, the assignment may simply say to write a composition. However, by that time, you should already know the model and the process: you must still make a note outline, write at least two drafts, and finally keep your final composition in a special folder.

Learning to write and speak more persuasively is a tremendous investment that will pay back dividends to you for the rest of your life. It is fun to see your command of the tools of language improve over time. With your newly discovered capacity for persuasion, however, comes a new responsibility. Remember always to persuade your audience—whether it is a friend, sibling, or stranger—toward the good. This is one of the noblest functions of language.

If something isn't clear, don't hesitate to ask your parent or teacher for help. Discuss each lesson with them. This is not meant to be a workbook that you use all by yourself; it is a book of lessons that should be used under the guidance of your parent or teacher. Above all, have fun.

To the Parent and Teacher...

This book is intended primarily for use with the IEW's *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style* program. If you are not familiar with that course, you might find this book difficult to use. Along those lines, it is important to understand that this is not a workbook that will teach the student rhetoric. It is a collection of lessons that you, the teacher, can use to teach rhetoric. You are the critical element for success with this book.

You will notice that there is a wide sampling of passages from classical and contemporary works within this book. Certainly feel free to use your own source texts for the different assignments, especially if they integrate into your curriculum more easily. Many of the source texts were chosen for their rhetorical properties, but I also tried to create a survey of classical texts from various periods in the tradition. The texts contained in this book are but a small sample of the literary wealth in the Western Canon.

We would be remiss to exclude the Bible from these texts. It would be an absolute injustice to ignore the literary contributions of the Bible, especially since much of its language has become archetypal in the field of rhetorical persuasion. We must acknowledge the contributions of the Biblical authors to the tradition of classical rhetoric and therefore have included excerpts from the Bible in some of the later units.

This book is designed for the advanced student who already has a firm grasp of grammar and who is able to employ the rhetorical techniques that are taught in this book. However, the check sheets for each lesson are only suggestions. Your students will work at a different pace. You should adjust the check sheet to include or exclude skills as you progress. That flexibility makes this an ideal book for teaching students at different levels of proficiency.

In many cases, I have chosen to include source texts as the students might find them in an advanced high school level curriculum. The excerpt from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, for example, has been reduced in length but not difficulty. I encourage you to help the students improve their reading skills by helping them to read the more difficult passages. If they clearly understand the passages, then they will enjoy analyzing them much more. My hope is that the students will find that they have an interest in these classical texts and will want to continue their study of the classical tradition.

Some of the grammar and punctuation taught in this book may differ slightly from what you normally practice in your home or classroom. You are the teacher, and it is your prerogative to teach your students what you want them to learn. If you prefer to teach a different set of comma rules, for example, by all means teach them in your own way. These lessons are not meant to be authoritative, but rather to be a source of ideas, models, and techniques to broaden composition experience and aptitude.

Above all, be joyful. Smile as you teach, and your students will respond more enthusiastically. The check sheets in this book are not intended to be rubrics for assigning grades. This model check sheet includes a sample grading system, but ultimately the teacher should assign grades based on his or her own judgment and criteria.

If you wish to grade your students' writing, you may assign points to each of the items on the check sheet. To obtain grade percentages, divide the total number of points the student earns by the number of points available. Then multiply by 100 to get the percentage. For example, if a student receives 30 points out of 34 total available points, then the percentage would be 88%, a "B."

Model Graded Check Sheet

<p>Presentation</p> <p>___ title centered and underlined (2)</p> <p>___ name, date (2)</p> <p>___ clearly presented (1)</p> <p>Mechanics</p> <p>___ indent paragraphs (2)</p> <p>___ complete sentences (2)</p> <p>___ capitalization (2)</p> <p>___ punctuation (2)</p> <p>Style Tools</p> <p>___ underline dress-ups (one of each) (1)</p> <p>___ number sentence openers (1)</p> <p>___ no banned adjectives (see p. 18) (1)</p> <p>Rhetoric (frequency: once per composition)</p> <p>___ Did the passage contain a proverb? (2)</p>	<p>Sentence Openers (once per paragraph)</p> <p>___ 2. prepositional phrase (2)</p> <p>___ 3. "-ly" word (2)</p> <hr/> <p>Dress-ups (once per paragraph)</p> <p>___ dual "-ly" word (2)</p> <p>___ "who/which" clause (2)</p> <p>___ invisible "who/which" clause (2)</p> <p>___ no "to be" verbs with "who/which" (2)</p> <p>___ because clause (2)</p> <p>___ dual adjectives (2)</p>
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Style Point Totals: _____ / 34

Grade: A = 90% - 100%
 B = 80% - 90%
 C = 70% - 80%
 D = 60% - 70%
 F = 0% - 60%

Lesson 8: Theseus and Minos

Objective

To practice summarizing. In this lesson, limiting becomes important because you will summarize a very complex story.

Source Text

Years before Theseus's arrival in Athens, a terrible misfortune had happened to the city. Minos, the powerful ruler of Crete, had lost his only son, Androgeus, while the young man was visiting the Athenian king. King Aegeus had done what no host should do: he had sent his guest on an expedition full of peril—to kill a dangerous bull. Instead, the bull had killed the youth. Minos invaded the country, captured Athens and declared that he would raze it to the ground unless every nine years the people sent him a tribute of seven maidens and seven youths. A horrible fate awaited these young creatures. When they reached Crete they were given to the Minotaur to devour.

The Minotaur was a monster, half bull, half human. When the Minotaur was born, Minos did not kill him, against the will of the gods. Instead, he had Daedalus, a great architect and inventor, construct a place of confinement for him from which escape was impossible. Daedalus built the Labyrinth, famous throughout the world. Once inside, one would go endlessly along its twisting paths without ever finding the exit. To this place, the young Athenians were each time taken and left to the Minotaur. There was no possible way to escape. In whatever direction they ran, they might be running straight to the monster; if they stood still, he might at any moment emerge from the maze. Such was the doom that awaited fourteen youths and maidens a few days after Theseus reached Athens. The time had come for the next installment of the tribute.

At once Theseus came forward and offered to be one of the victims. All loved him for his goodness and admired him for his nobility, but they had no idea that he planned to kill the Minotaur.

When the young victims arrived in Crete, they were paraded before the inhabitants on their way to the Labyrinth. Minos's daughter Ariadne was among the spectators, and she fell in love with Theseus at first sight as he marched past her. She sent for Daedalus and told him he must show her a way to get out of the Labyrinth. She gave Theseus the clue she had gotten from Daedalus, a ball of thread that he was to fasten at one end inside of the door and unwind as he went on. This he did, and, certain that he could retrace his steps whenever he chose, he walked boldly into the maze looking for the Minotaur. Theseus came upon him asleep and fell upon him, pinning

him to the ground, and with his fists—he had no other weapon—he battered the monster to death.

When Theseus lifted himself up from that terrific struggle, the ball of thread lay where he had dropped it. With it in his hands, the way out for all the Athenians was clear.

When King Minos learned that the Athenians had found their way out, he was convinced that they could have done so only if Daedalus had helped them. Accordingly, he imprisoned him and his son Icarus in the Labyrinth, certainly a proof that it was excellently devised since not even the maker of it could discover the exit without a clue. But the great inventor was not at a loss. He told his son, "Escape may be checked by water and land, but the air and the sky are free," and he made two pairs of wings for them. They put them on. Just before they took flight, Daedalus warned Icarus to keep a middle course over the sea. If he flew too high, the sun might melt the glue and the wings drop off. However, as stories so often show, what elders say, youth disregards. As the two flew lightly and without effort away from Crete, the delight of this new and wonderful power went to the boy's head. He soared exultingly up and up, paying no heed to his father's anguished commands. Then he fell. The wings had come off. He dropped into the sea, and the waters closed over him. The afflicted father flew safely to Sicily, where he was received kindly by the king.

Minos was enraged at his escape and determined to find him. He made a cunning plan. He had it proclaimed everywhere that a great reward would be given to whoever could pass a thread through an intricately spiraled shell. Daedalus told the Sicilian king that he could do it. He bored a small hole in the closed end of the shell, fastened a thread to an ant, introduced the ant into the hole, and then closed it. When the ant finally came out at the other end, the thread, of course, was running clear through all the twists and turns. "Only Daedalus would think of that," Minos said, and he came to Sicily to seize him. But the king refused to surrender him, and in the contest Minos was slain. Because of his inflexibility in life, Minos was not sent to live in the Elysian Fields. Instead, he was appointed to be one of the judges of souls passing into the realms of the Underworld.

Adapted from Edith Hamilton's *Mythology*

Assignment

1. Read the story of Theseus and Minos.
2. Create a three-paragraph outline, carefully following the Narrative Story Model given in Lesson 6, by asking questions from the Story Sequence Chart. Handwrite your outline below. If you find it difficult to get all of the details into three paragraphs, you may choose to limit your composition to only one of the storylines (i.e., tell the story of either Minos or Theseus).
3. Following your outline and the check sheet on page 38, write a three-paragraph, double-spaced summary from your outline. Edit, get help, and, when you are satisfied, rewrite or type your composition.
4. Keep your finished version of this composition in your folder.

Structural Tools and Suggestions

The passage above contains stories about several characters—Minos, Theseus, Ariadne, Daedalus and Icarus. Despite being short in length, there are several anecdotes contained within it. On your note outline, you will not have much room to mark down extra details. Try your best to come up with key words that will remind you of the story sequence. This exercise will train you to limit your notes to the most significant details. Decide which of the characters are the most important and take notes on only their storyline.

In the conclusion, you are welcome to comment on the moral or message of the story. It may be somewhat difficult to detect, so feel free to invent your own message or lesson that the story teaches. Try to state the message in the form of a proverb or maxim. Remember: draw your title from the key words in the last line of your composition.

Narrative Story Model Outline: Theseus and Minos

(Refer to the Story Sequence Chart for help)

I. _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

(4.) _____

(5.) _____

II. _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

(4.) _____

(5.) _____

III. _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

(4.) _____

(5.) _____

Style Tools and Examples

Make lists of quality adjectives describing the following characters. You may also make quality adjective lists of the other characters or anything else that will help you in your composition.

Minos

Theseus

Daedalus

Labyrinth

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Polysyndeton and Asyndeton

Polysyndeton and asyndeton both concern the usage of coordinating conjunctions. The repetition of conjunctions in close succession is **polysyndeton**. Its opposite is **asyndeton**, which is the omission of conjunctions where the reader normally expects them. In Greek, the prefix “poly-” means “many,” and the prefix “a-” (or “an-” before a vowel), which is called the *alpha privative*, expresses absence or negation. The common root, *syndetos*, in Greek means “linked” or “bound together.”

After recalling the lesson in Unit II that a balanced sentence coordinates—or binds together—grammatically equivalent elements, you can easily see that polysyndeton and asyndeton are two different tools used for linking words and phrases. Each tool creates a different effect. Consider the following examples:

I have looked here and there and everywhere for my keys. They are still lost.

Polysyndeton

Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils, / Shrunk to this little measure? (Shakespeare)

Asyndeton

Notice how the extra *and* in the first example tends to draw out the feeling of the sentence. Figuratively, the extra conjunction slows down the pacing of the expression and seems to suggest the endlessness of the search for the speaker’s lost keys. On the other hand, when Shakespeare omitted the *and* between “triumphs” and “spoils,” it quickens the pace of the sentence and seems to underscore the shrinking of the addressee’s military triumphs.

From now on, employ at least one polysyndeton or asyndeton in each of your essays. It is unnecessary to use them in every paragraph. These devices are like strong spices: overuse can spoil a whole essay!

Rhetoric Fun

Identify whether each sentence uses Polysyndeton or Asyndeton by marking it with a “P” or an “A.”

Ex. 1 The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil. (Exodus) A

Ex. 2 When you are old and gray and full of sleep, / And nodding by the fire, take down this book. (Yeats) P

1. Be one of the few, the proud, the Marines. (Marine Corps Advertisement) _____

2. Duty, Honor, Country: Those three hallowed words reverently dictate what you ought to be, what you can be, what you will be. (MacArthur) _____

3. In years gone by, there were in every community men and women who spoke the language of duty and morality and loyalty and obligation. (Buckley) _____

4. And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good. (Genesis) _____

5. A cathedral, a wave of a storm, a dancer’s leap, never turn out to be as high as we had hoped. (Proust) _____

6. Unless hours were cups of sack, and minutes capons, and clocks the tongues of bawds, and dials the signs of leaping houses, and the blessed sun himself a fair hot wench in flame-colour’d taffeta, I see no reason why thou shouldst be so superfluous to demand the time of the day. (Shakespeare) _____

Practice

Now it is your turn to practice using polysyndeton and asyndeton. For each of the topics below, craft at least two sentences, one using polysyndeton and the other asyndeton, that employ the rhetorical effects of the devices. Use the model as an example.

Remember, coordinating conjunctions can link *any* grammatically equivalent elements, so you are not limited to adjectives. Try using the rhetorical devices with verbs, nouns, adverbs, anything, as long as the items are grammatically equivalent. (You may need to use a separate sheet of paper.)

Labyrinth

Polysyndeton: The Labyrinth was an abyss, cavernous and profound and infinite.

Asyndeton: Youths knew as they entered the Labyrinth that they walked to a certain, quick, inescapable death.

Minos

Polysyndeton: _____

Asyndeton: _____

Theseus

Polysyndeton: _____

Asyndeton: _____

Ariadne

Polysyndeton: _____

Asyndeton: _____

Daedalus

Polysyndeton: _____

Asyndeton: _____

Icarus

Polysyndeton: _____

Asyndeton: _____

Lesson 9: Chanticleer and the Fox

Objective

To learn to rewrite narrative stories using the plot of the story but changing the characters and the setting.

Source Text

A widow poor, somewhat advanced in age,
Lived, on a time, within a small cottage.
A yard she had, enclosed all roundabout
With pales, and there was a dry ditch without,
And in the yard a cock called Chanticleer.
In all the land, for crowing, he'd no peer.
This noble cock had in his governance
Seven hens to give him pride and all pleasure,
Which were his sisters and his paramours,
And wondrously like him as to colours,
Whereof the fairest hued upon her throat
Was called the winsome Mistress Pertelote.
Courteous she was, discreet and debonnaire,
Companionable, and she had been so fair.

So it befell that, in a bright dawning,
As Chanticleer 'midst wives and sisters all
Sat on his perch, the which was in the hall,
And next him sat the winsome Pertelote,
This Chanticleer he groaned within his throat
Like man that in his dreams is troubled sore.
And when fair Pertelote thus heard him roar,
She was aghast and said: "O sweetheart dear,
What ails you that you groan so? Do you hear?
You are a sleepy herald. Fie, for shame!"
And he replied to her thus: "Ah, madam,
I dreamed that while I wandered up and down
Within our yard, I saw there a strange beast
Was like a dog, and he'd have made a feast
Upon my body and have had me dead."
"Aha," said she, "fie on you, spiritless!
Alas!" cried she, "for by that God above,
Now have you lost my heart and all my love;
I cannot love a coward, by my faith.
For truly, whatsoever woman saith,
We all desire, if only it may be,
To have a husband hardy, wise, and free,
And trustworthy, no niggard, and no fool,
Nor one that is afraid of every tool,
Nor yet a braggart, by that God above!
How dare you say, for shame, unto your love
That there is anything that you have feared?
Have you not man's heart, and yet have a beard?
Alas! And are you frightened by a vision?
Dreams are, God knows, a matter for derision.
Dread no more dreams. And I can say no more."
"Madam," said he, "gramercy for your lore.
Nevertheless, not running Cato down,
Who had for wisdom such a high renown,
And though he says to hold no dreams in dread,
By God, men have, in many old books, read
Of many a man more an authority
That ever Cato was, pray pardon me,

Who say just the reverse of his sentence,
And have found out by long experience
That dreams, indeed, are good significations,
As much of joys as of all tribulations
That folk endure here in this life present.
There is no need to make an argument."

And with that word he flew down from the beam,
For it was day, and down went his hens all;
And with a cluck he them began to call,
For he had found some corn within the yard.
Regal he was, and fears he did discard.

He looked as if he were a grim lion
As on his toes he strutted up and down;
He deigned not set his foot upon the ground.
He clucked when any grain of corn he found,
And all his wives came running at his call.
Thus regal, as a prince is in his hall,
I'll now leave busy Chanticleer to feed,
And with events that followed I'll proceed.

A brant-fox, full of sly iniquity,
That in the grove had lived two years, or three,
Now by a fine premeditated plot
That same night, breaking through the hedge, had got
Into the yard where Chanticleer the fair
Was wont, and all his wives, too, to repair;
And in a bed of greenery still he lay
Till it was past the quarter of the day,
Waiting his chance on Chanticleer to fall,
As gladly do these killers one and all
Who lie in ambush for to murder men.
O Chanticleer, accused be that morrow
When you into that yard flew from the beams!
You were well warned, and fully, by your dreams
That this day should hold peril damnably.
But that which God foreknows, it needs must be.

All in the sand a-bathing merrily
Lay Pertelote, with all her sisters by,
There in the sun; and Chanticleer so free
Sang merrier than a mermaid in the sea,
And so befell that, as he cast his eye
Among the herbs and on a butterfly,
He saw this fox that lay there, crouching low.
When Chanticleer the fox did then espy,
He would have fled but that the fox anon
Said: "Gentle sir, alas! Why be thus gone?
Are you afraid of me, who am your friend?
Now, surely, I were worse than any fiend
If I should do you harm or villainy.
I came not here upon your deeds to spy;

But, certainly, the cause of my coming
Was only just to listen to you sing.
For truly, you have quite as fine a voice
As angels have that Heaven's choirs rejoice;
Now sing, dear sir, for holy charity."
This Chanticleer his wings began to beat,
As one that could no treason there espy,
So was he ravished by this flattery.
Alas, you lords! Full many a flatterer
Is in your courts, and many a cozener,
That please your honours much more, by my fay,
Than he that truth and justice dares to say.
Go read the Ecclesiast on flattery;
Beware, my lords, of all their treachery!
This Chanticleer stood high upon his toes,
Stretching his neck, and both his eyes did close,
And so did crow right loudly, for the nonce;
And Russel Fox, he started up at once,
And by the gorget grabbed our Chanticleer,
Flung him on back, and toward the wood did steer,
For there was no man who as yet pursued.
O destiny, you cannot be eschewed!
Alas, that Chanticleer flew from the beams!
Alas, his wife recked nothing of his dreams!

This simple widow and her daughters two
Heard these hens cry and make so great ado,
And out of doors they started on the run
And saw the fox into the grove just gone,
Bearing upon his back the cock away.
And then they cried, "Alas, and weladay!
Oh, oh, the fox!" and after him they ran,
And after them, with staves, went many a man;
So terrible was the noise, ah ben'cite!
It seemed as if the heaven itself should fall!
And now, good men, I pray you hearken all.
Behold how Fortune turns all suddenly
The hope and pride of even her enemy!
This cock, which lay across the fox's back,
In all his fear unto the fox did clack
And say: "Sir, were I you, as I should be,
Then would I say (as God may now help me!),
'Turn back again, presumptuous peasants all!
A very pestilence upon you fall!
Now that I've gained here to this dark wood's side,
In spite of you this cock shall here abide.
I'll eat him, by my faith, and that anon!"

The fox replied: "In faith, it shall be done!"
And as he spoke that word, all suddenly
This cock broke from his mouth, full cleverly,
And high upon a tree he flew anon.
And when the fox saw well that he was gone,
"Alas," quoth he, "O Chanticleer, alas!
I have against you done a base trespass
In that I frightened you, my dear old pard,
When you I seized and brought from out that yard;
But, sir, I did it with no foul intent;
Come down, and I will tell you what I meant.
I'll tell the truth to you, God help me so!"

"Nay, then," said he, "beshrew us both, you know,
But first, beshrew myself, both blood and bones,
If you beguile me, having done so once.
You shall no more, with any flattery,
Cause me to sing and close up either eye,
For he who shuts his eyes when he should see,
And willfully, God let him ne'er be free!"

"Nay," said the fox, "but God give him mischance
Who is so indiscreet in governance
He chatters when he ought to hold his peace."
Lo, such it is when watch and ward do cease
And one grows negligent with flattery.
But you that hold this tale a foolery,
As but about a fox, a cock, a hen,
Yet do not miss the moral, my good men.
For Saint Paul says that all that's written well
Is written down some useful truth to tell.
Then take the wheat and let the chaff lie still.
And now, good God, and if it be Thy will,
As says Lord Christ, so make us all good men
And bring us into His high bliss. Amen.

From "The Nun's Priest's Tale" by Chaucer

Assignment

1. After reading the story, create a three-paragraph outline following the Narrative Story Model. This story contains many details, but make sure you limit the number of notes you take, rather than increase the length of the outline. Keep a maximum of five details per paragraph. Limiting is vital.
2. Using your outline, write a double-spaced, three-paragraph composition, describing the story of Chanticleer’s vanity. Use your check sheet to make sure you include all the required elements, have it edited, then rewrite or type a final draft.
3. A creative option is to change the characters and setting but keep the problem. For example, instead of happening in medieval times, your story could take place in the Old West, or in the future. Changing Chanticleer into a person will also change the way that the antagonist traps him. This technique of changing characters and setting but keeping the basic plot can be used for creative writing practice with almost any parable, anecdote, fable, or fairy tale.

Narrative Story Outline: Chanticleer and the Fox

I. _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

II. _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

III. _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Check Sheet for Lessons 8, 9, and 10

Presentation

- ___ title centered and underlined
- ___ name, date
- ___ clearly presented

Mechanics

- ___ indent paragraphs
- ___ complete sentences
- ___ capitals (uppercase)
- ___ punctuation

Style Tools

- ___ underline dress-ups (one of each)
- ___ number sentence openers
- ___ no banned adjectives
- ___ no banned verbs
- ___ topic/clincher rule

Rhetoric (frequency: once per composition)

- ___ Did the passage contain a proverb?
- ___ correlative conjunction
- ___ polysyndeton/asyndeton

Sentence Openers (once per paragraph)

- ___ 1. subject
- ___ 2. preposition
- ___ 3. "-ly" word
- ___ 4. "ing"/"ed" opener
- ___ 5. adverb clause opener
- ___ 6. VSS (<5 words)

Dress-ups (once per paragraph)

- ___ dual "-ly" word
- ___ "who/which" clause
- ___ invisible "who/which" clause
- ___ no "to be" verbs with "who/which"
- ___ because clause
- ___ dual adjectives
- ___ parallelism
- ___ dual strong verbs