

GREEK HEROES

Imitation in Writing Series
Book 4

Matt Whitling

Logos School Materials
Moscow, Idaho

IMITATION IN WRITING

This *Greek Heroes* text is the fourth book in a growing series of Imitation in Writing materials designed to teach aspiring writers the art and discipline of crafting delightful prose and poetry.

Aesop's Fables

Fairy Tales

Medieval Legends

Greek Myths

Greek Heroes

The Grammar of Poetry Primer

The Grammar of Poetry Primer Teacher's Edition

The Grammar of Poetry

The Grammar of Poetry Teacher's Edition

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Imitation In Writing

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Background:

We are commanded in Scripture to imitate the Lord Jesus Christ. We are also commanded to imitate those brothers and sisters who, through faith and patience, have inherited the promises. To imitate something or someone means:

- To do or try to do after the manner of; to follow the example of; to copy in action.
- To make or produce a copy or representation of; to copy, reproduce.
- To be, become, or make oneself like; to assume the aspect or semblance of; to simulate.

This God-sanctioned method of learning is an essential tool for educating young people. For example, how is it that we teach a child to perform simple physical skills such as throwing and catching? “Hold your hands **like this**. Step forward as you throw **like this**.” Imitation. How is it that we teach a child how to form his letters correctly? “Hold your pencil **like this**. Look at **this ‘a’**. Trace **this letter**. Now, you try to make an ‘a’ **like this one**.” Imitation. How is it that we teach art? At Logos School students learn how to paint by imitating master painters of the past. “**This** is a good painting. Let’s see if you can **reproduce it**.” Imitation. How is it that music is taught, or reading, or math? Very often the best instruction in any of these areas necessarily includes imitation. Why, when it comes to teaching young people writing, do we educators regularly neglect this effective tool?

Educators in seventeenth century England knew the value of imitation as a tool through which they could teach style, particularly in the area of writing. The primary method of imitation in these English grammar schools was called **Double Translation**. In a double translation the teacher would translate a Latin work into English. The student was to copy this English translation over, paying close attention to every word and its significance. Then the student was to write down the English and Latin together, one above the other, making each language answer to the other. Afterwards the student translated the original Latin to English on his own. This was the first part of the translation. The second part took place ten days afterward when the student was given his final English translation and required to turn it back into good Latin.

Benjamin Franklin wrote of a similar exercise that he employed to educate himself a century later. When he was a young man, he came across a particular piece of writing that he delighted in, *The Spectator*. *The Spectator* is a series of 555 popular essays published in 1711 and 1712. These essays were intended to improve manners and morals, raise the cultural level of the middle-class reader, and popularize serious ideas in science and philosophy. They were written well, the style was excellent, and Franklin wanted to imitate it. Here is Franklin’s method of “double translation” regarding *The Spectator*:

With that view (imitating this great work) I took some of the papers, and

making short hints of the sentiments in each sentence, laid them by a few days, and then, without looking at the book, tried to complete the papers again, by expressing each hinted sentiment at length, and as fully as it had been expressed before, in any suitable words that should occur to me. Then I compared my Spectator with the original, discovered some of my faults, and corrected them.

But he realized that he needed a greater stock of words in order to add variety and clarity of thought to his writing.

Therefore I took some of the tales in the Spectator, and turned them into verse; and, after a time, when I had pretty well forgotten the prose, turned them back again. I also sometimes jumbled my collection of hints into confusion, and after some weeks endeavored to reduce them into the best order, before I began to form the sentences and complete the subject. This was to teach me method in the arrangement of thoughts. By comparing my work with the original, I discovered many faults and corrected them; but I sometimes had the pleasure to fancy that, in particulars of small consequence, I had been fortunate enough to improve the method or the language, and this encouraged me to think that I might in time become to be a tolerable English writer, of which I was extremely ambitious.

Now the question is; "How can we employ a similar methodology?"

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Instructions:

1. **READ SILENTLY:** Have the students read the myth quietly to themselves, paying close attention to the story line. When they are done, they should underline the vocabulary words and describe the characters. Discuss, by means of questioning, who the characters are in the myth and what took place.
2. **STUDENT READS MYTH:** Choose a student to come to the front of the class and read the entire myth while the class follows along. (*Variation: To develop listening and note taking skills try reading the myth to your students without giving them a copy of it.*)
3. **ORAL RETELLING:** The teacher calls on individual students to retell the myth in their own words. These oral summaries should be short and to the point.
4. **VOCABULARY:** Call on one student for each of the vocabulary words. That student will read the sentence in which the word is found, providing context, and then define the word for the class. Occasionally the student definition will need to be modified by the teacher so that it is an exact match with the vocabulary word in the myth. One word definitions work well. The idea here is to provide the students with a synonym for each vocabulary word which could be substituted into the sentence without distorting the meaning. Have the students write the definition of each word on the blank provided.
5. **OUTLINE THE PLOT:** Initially this activity should be guided by the teacher and completed as a class. Providing every other simple sentence or phrase for each scene is helpful for younger students. There is some room for variation in the exact wording of the sentence or phrase. The rules are that each sentence or phrase must be three to four words long and represent a significant chronological event in that scene. From time to time the students will come up with a better sentence or phrase than the one provided in the *Suggested Plot Summaries* at the back of this book. Use it, by all means.
6. **CHARACTERS:** At this point the students will list the main characters in the story and write a few descriptive words about each.
7. **ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS:** Discuss any additional requirements and have the students write them on the blanks provided at the bottom of each worksheet. For examples of additional requirements see *EXCELLENCE IN WRITING @ 800-856-5815* (stylistic techniques, dress-ups, sentence openers, etc...) or teach your students figures of speech and require that they use them in their own writing (metaphor, simile, synecdoche, hyperbole, onomatopoeia, rhetorical question, personification, pun, oxymoron, alliteration).

8. **PASS IN ORIGINAL MYTH:** Before the students begin rewriting the myth they must pass the original one in. Some students will want to read through the myth one more time to better understand what the whole thing is all about.

9. **WRITE FIRST DRAFT:** The students are now ready to rewrite the myth using their outlines to guide them. I allow my students to change the characters and some of the incidentals of the story in their rewrites as long as the plot is identifiable. The exceptionally good writers in the class will thrive off of this opportunity to be innovative. The students who are less comfortable with writing will tend to stick to the same characters and incidentals, which is fine. All of the vocabulary words must be used correctly and underlined in the rewrite. The students should skip lines on the first draft to allow room for editing.

10. **PARENTS EDIT:** Students take their rewrites home to complete the first draft and then they have their parents edit it. This is most profitable when the parents sit down with the student and edit the myth together. Guidelines for editing can be sent home at the beginning of the year or communicated at "Back to School Night" so that parents know what is expected.

11. **FINAL DRAFT:** Time in class can be provided for the students to work on the final draft. The students should not skip lines. I allow the students to draw an illuminated letter at the beginning of their story if they like.

12. **GRADING:** There is a grading sheet included which can be duplicated, cut out, completed, and stapled to each student's rewrite. This will help the teacher to focus on the essential aspects of the composition as he is grading it and will provide specific feedback to the student and parents regarding which areas will need more attention in the future. If you have a different policy for grading writing assignments then simply disregard the grading sheet.