



# Mechanics of Composition

SETON HOME STUDY SCHOOL

Lesson Plans ♦ Tests ♦ Answer Keys ♦ Quarter Report Forms



Course Manual

ENG122\_18A

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Revised December 2017

Outer Cover: *St. Peter Walking on the Water*, Alessandro Allori

Inner Cover: *St. Joseph in His Workshop*, Gerrit van Honthorst

**Parent-teacher: Please grade this Lesson 3 composition according to the guidelines at the beginning of Week Six of this Course Manual, and enter the grade in Section A on the First Quarter Report Form.**

## **WEEK NINE**

### **Section II: Narratives**

#### **LESSON 4 – Using Dialogue in a Narrative**

The following is a sample dialogue. Notice that it has a short introduction, followed by the dialogue. Tag phrases are used in the dialogue to indicate the speaker, as well as indicate some emotion.

Billy was over at his friend Jake's house playing checkers. It had been clear for some time that Jake was not going to win. Jake's face had grown more and more sullen as the game continued. When Billy claimed the last opposing piece, Jake suddenly exploded.

"It's not fair!" he shouted. He overturned the board, sending the checker pieces flying.

"What's that about?" asked Billy, surprised.

"I'm mad," said Jake. "I never win!"

"That's not true," said Billy. "You won last time. You really shouldn't get that upset."

"What's the harm?" asked Jake. "It's my house. Besides, I wasn't mad at you. I was mad at the game."

"I know what it's like to be mad," said Billy. "Last week I lost my temper and yelled at my sister. I didn't want to; it just seemed to happen. After I apologized later, it made me curious to see what the Catechism had to say. It said the emotion of anger isn't wrong, but if we do nothing to control it, it can turn into hate. If something overpowers me and controls my actions, I'm enslaved to it. And who wants that?"

"So what do you suggest?" asked Jake sarcastically. "Bottle it up inside and pretend I don't feel anything, like a robot?"

"No, but I've noticed in my own life that when I'm that angry, there's usually something going on underneath. In the case with my sister," Billy continued, "when I sat down to think about it, I wasn't actually mad at her. I was mad about dropping that pop fly at the baseball game. I'd gotten mad about a game too. I'd just transferred it to her."

"Now that you mention it," said Jake. "I'm angry we always play checkers. You're better at it. I'd like to play chess more."

"Well, next time we'll play chess," said Billy. "Anyway," he said after a moment, "I've got to get home now."

Billy picked up his ball cap and moved over to the door.

"I'm sorry I got mad like that," Jake said suddenly. "That's not me."

"Thanks," said Billy. "You're a good friend."

**Reviewing the Selection:** Circle the correct answer.

1. Where does the story take place?
  - a. a park
  - b. Billy's house
  - c. Jake's house
  
2. As Jake is losing the game, what word describes his face?
  - a. "sullen"
  - b. "angry"
  - c. "bored"
  
3. Jake reacts to losing the game by
  - a. showing good sportsmanship.
  - b. overturning the checkerboard.
  - c. crying.
  
4. Billy's reaction to this is
  - a. surprise.
  - b. fear.
  - c. anger.
  
5. What is Jake's attempt to justify this reaction?
  - a. He's having a bad day.
  - b. He never wins.
  - c. He hates checkers.
  
6. According to Billy, what does the Catechism say about anger?
  - a. The emotion is wrong in and of itself.
  - b. The emotion isn't wrong by itself but can lead to hate if left uncontrolled.
  - c. Anger isn't an emotion at all.
  
7. What other argument does Billy add to this?
  - a. Anger enslaves a person.
  - b. Anger makes a person look silly.
  - c. Anger is uncool.
  
8. What is Jake's argument against trying to control anger?
  - a. It's impossible; it can't be done.
  - b. It's not worth trying.
  - c. He will become unfeeling like a robot.



9. When Billy shares what was underlying his anger at his sister the previous week, Jake
  - a. still refuses to see his point.
  - b. reveals what was underlying his own anger.
  - c. keeps silent.
  
10. How do we know Billy's message has changed Jake?
  - a. Jake smiles.
  - b. Jake nods.
  - c. Jake apologizes.

### **For Writers: Writing a Dialogue**

Dialogue is an important component of most narratives. Usually it is more concentrated and to the point than conversations in real life, and this is why students must be advised to “listen” attentively to what the characters are saying. From it, they can learn a great deal about the characters who are speaking, the things they are speaking about, and the action—past, present, and future—of the story. Sometimes, too, the theme of the story is contained in dialogue.

As writers, students should be cautioned against the indiscriminate use of dialogue. Students should use dialogue in their stories only when they have a purpose for doing so (e.g., to reveal character) or when they wish to achieve a particular effect (e.g., humor).

Optional preparatory activity: Sister Maria, who operates a local special school for children with Down's Syndrome, needs help over the Christmas holidays since her regular workers will be visiting their families. She calls you and asks if you will come and work. Write a narrative describing the phone conversation. Most of your narrative should be in the form of dialogue.

**Assignment:** Write a dialogue between a parent and a child or between two individuals in which one of the characters explains and clarifies an important moral point. Choose from one of the following topics: lying, stealing, cheating, not attending Mass on Sunday, or disobedience. You can refer to a catechism if you wish, but since this is a dialogue, a conversation, you want to use normal speaking between two friends, not a scholarly presentation for a test paper. Notice that a new paragraph begins each time the speaker changes. Note: For the sake of clarity, sometimes use “tag phrases” like “he said” or “Mother said.” Notice that in a good dialogue, the participants respond clearly and directly to the comments of the other person.

By the end of the dialogue, the person being spoken to, about the moral question, needs to show that he has had a change of heart and accepts the truth.

Notice that this composition, since it contains dialogue, will have more than one paragraph. You should have only one paragraph introducing the narrative, with the rest of it being the dialogue. A concluding paragraph in a dialogue is optional.

Look through the *Mechanics of Composition: Writing for Mastery* packet in the back of these lessons, and find the worksheet entitled “Lesson 4: The Dialogue.” Complete the worksheet and use it as a guide to write this essay.

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If you have any questions, please contact a High School English Counselor.



**Send the final copy of your typed composition for Lesson 4 to Seton for grading. To submit the assignment online, go to [www.setonhome.org](http://www.setonhome.org), click on My Seton, Log On, then click on Courses, then scroll down to Mechanics of Composition, then move your cursor to the right and click on the icon for Send (upload) Assignments.**

**If you use the mail: Please send Seton the First Quarter Report Form along with the following items for grading:**

- 1. Lesson 1 Composition (typed)**
- 2. Lesson 2 Composition (typed)**
- 3. Lesson 4 Composition (typed)**



## Second Quarter

### WEEK TEN

#### LESSON 5 – Narration: Relating Events in a Chronological, Climactic Order

The following is the complete short story “Birthday Party” by Katherine Brush. Although it is only three paragraphs long, the author is able to generate a strong response from the reader using brief but vivid descriptions and a clear narration of the events. Notice how, even in a story this short, there is a definite sequence of events, as the author introduces the characters, builds suspense, and ends with a strong climax and quiet, affecting resolution.

They were a couple in their late thirties, and they looked unmistakably married. They sat on the banquette opposite us in a little narrow restaurant, having dinner. The man had a round, self-satisfied face, with glasses on it; the woman was fadingly pretty, in a big hat. There was nothing conspicuous about them, nothing particularly noticeable, until the end of their meal, when it suddenly became obvious that this was an Occasion – in fact, the husband’s birthday, and the wife had planned a little surprise for him.

It arrived, in the form of a small but glossy birthday cake, with one pink candle burning in the center. The headwaiter brought it in and placed it before the husband, and meanwhile the violin-and-piano orchestra played “Happy Birthday to You” and the wife beamed with shy pride over her little surprise, and such few people as were there in the restaurant tried to help out with a pattering of applause. It became clear at once that help was needed, because the husband was not pleased. Instead he was hotly embarrassed, and indignant at his wife for embarrassing him.

You looked at him and you saw this and you thought, “Oh, now, don’t be like that!” But he was like that, and as soon as the little cake had been deposited on the table, and the orchestra had finished the birthday piece, and the general attention had shifted from the man and woman, I saw him say something to her under his breath – some punishing thing, quick and curt and unkind. I couldn’t bear to look at the woman then, so I stared at my plate and waited for quite a long time. Not long enough, though. She was still crying when I finally glanced over there again. Crying quietly and heart-brokenly and hopelessly, all to herself, under the gay big brim of her best hat.

**Reviewing the Selection:** Circle the correct answer.

1. The setting of the story is given as:
  - a. a mostly empty restaurant at dinnertime
  - b. an elegant lunch at someone’s house
  - c. a café at breakfast time
2. The author’s interesting description of the couple in the story is that they look:
  - a. “middle-aged and rich”
  - b. “unmistakably married”
  - c. “fashionable but unhappy”

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3. The author's individual descriptions of the two are that:
  - a. the man is "egotistical" and the woman is "submissive"
  - b. the man is "self-satisfied" and the woman is "fadingly pretty"
  - c. the man is "irritable" and the woman "sweet and kind"
  
4. Furthermore, the author highlights two items of clothing on the couple:
  - a. the man's spectacles and the woman's dress
  - b. the man's cufflinks and the woman's glasses
  - c. the man's glasses and the woman's big hat
  
5. After narrating that their meal has come to an end, the author then narrates:
  - a. a conversation between the two
  - b. the surprise that the wife has planned for the husband
  - c. their departure from the restaurant
  
6. The husband's reaction to the surprise is:
  - a. embarrassed and angry
  - b. cold and indifferent
  - c. happy and loving
  
7. Notice how the author has built in suspense and interest by progressing from a quiet dinner at a restaurant to:
  - a. a quiet dessert at a restaurant
  - b. a well-meant surprise that has backfired
  - c. an ice cream social afterwards
  
8. The story reaches its climax, its moment of highest intensity as:
  - a. the husband thanks his wife for her thoughtfulness
  - b. the husband storms out of the restaurant
  - c. the husband says something hurtful to his wife
  
9. The adverbs the author uses to describe the crying of the wife are:
  - a. "loudly and lengthily and sadly"
  - b. "sadly and tearfully and achingly"
  - c. "quietly and heart-brokenly and hopelessly"
  
10. Remember the description of the husband that highlighted the glasses. Despite having glasses, the husband can not "see" his wife's attempts to please him, because he is so self-conscious. The "gay big brim" of the wife's "best hat" is likely a symbol for:
  - a. her preoccupation with fashion
  - b. her well-meant attempts to show her husband she loves him
  - c. her extravagant lifestyle





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**Updated 12/14/2017**