

**THE PRINCIPLES OF RHETORIC:
WITH CONSTRUCTIVE AND
CRITICAL WORK IN
COMPOSITION**

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The principles of rhetoric: with constructive and critical work in composition by Elizabeth H. Spalding

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WORK IN COMPOSITION

BY

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AND "THE LANGUAGE SPELLER"

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

"THE art of instruction for the secondary school," it has been said, "may be summed up in one sentence: Inspire enthusiastic activity." It is not enough, however, to inspire such activity; provision for its proper exercise must be made.

The material that forms the basis of this book was collected in my own classes during a period of years, for the purpose of arousing and satisfying the pupil's interest and activity with reference to rhetoric and composition. Later, at the request of teachers, the material was put into the form of a book. That the book might meet general conditions in the classroom, it was submitted before its publication to able instructors and critics, teachers of English in a number of widely separated centres. Their suggestions were valuable, and are incorporated in the book as published.

Because many text-books already in use contain admirable presentations of rhetorical principles, with exercises on some of them and with lists of composition subjects, it is by no means unnecessary for the author of a new rhetoric to state what differentiates his work from other books on the same subject. Perhaps the most distinctive features of this rhetoric are the following:—

1. It is planned to meet a gradual increase of skill on the part of the pupil. As soon as he has gained knowledge from the working out of one composition problem, that knowledge is utilized in the solving of another. His study of Diction, for instance, is made to bear directly upon all subsequent exercises in composition.

2. It provides for the establishment of good habits. For example, not only is the subject of paragraph sequence taught, but, throughout the book, the writing of a sequence of paragraphs is repeatedly called for, and topics are given which in themselves form a sequence. In this way the thought of orderliness is kept in the pupil's mind, until he has acquired, with reference to paragraph sequence, not merely a definition, but a habit.

3. It recognizes the fact that knowledge which one cannot apply at will is not a part of one's actual equipment. Therefore, hardly a rhetorical fact is presented which is not utilized over and over again.

4. It groups composition subjects carefully, with reference to their especial adaptability to the particular problems with which they are associated. Moreover, it almost invariably offers a somewhat wide choice of subjects. Tasks are set, but the sense of freedom that is felt when a writer may take from a number of subjects what pleases him best, relieves their irksomeness.

5. It criticises from the standpoint of a fellow-worker intent upon results, not upon fault-finding.

6. It encourages self-reliance, since every writer must,

sooner or later, depend largely upon his own judgment and taste. No exercises are given to pupils until independent work may rightfully be demanded, until the principles on which the exercises are based have been explained, illustrated by means of quotations from good authors, and again illustrated through similar exercises worked out by other pupils in their own classrooms. A good deal of time and thought were expended upon the collection of the student material used under exercises. Simple, direct work often was preferred to what might be stronger and more dramatic, yet less safe to insert in a text-book. I believe this student material to be especially serviceable, aside from the fact that it gives opportunities for criticism and reconstruction. The very admiration that a pupil feels for Wordsworth or Browning, for Burke or Macaulay, makes him realize his own comparative impotence, with a consequent sense of discouragement; but let him hear what one of his peers—a boy like himself—has written, in an honest and more or less skilful way, and he is eager to try something of the same sort himself. The masterpieces are still before him as models.

7. The rhetoric offers opportunities for the application of rhetorical theory to complete pieces of literature—"Silas Marner" and "The Vision of Sir Launfal." It is often desirable during a recitation to have an entire class find an illustration of the truth of some statement. The story and the poem mentioned are valuable for such investigation. The rhetoric is complete in itself, however, and the use of the literature referred to is altogether optional.

Although many of the answers contained in the five chapters called "Answers to Pupils' Inquiries" were suggested by questions in my own classes, other matter has been inserted to make the chapters comprehensive enough to meet general needs.

The following pages represent not only my own work and thought, and my interest in the secondary school, but also the careful consideration and helpful contribution of many teachers and pupils. To all who have assisted me I am very grateful.

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