

**THE ELEMENTS OF  
ENGLISH COMPOSITION:  
A PREPARATION FOR  
RHETORIC**

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The Elements of English Composition: A Preparation for Rhetoric by L. A. Chittenden

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THE ELEMENTS  
OF  
ENGLISH COMPOSITION.

A PREPARATION FOR RHETORIC.

BY

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HIGH SCHOOL.

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*George W. Hayes*

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## PREFACE.

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This work is prepared for the lower grades of the High School. The object has been to furnish, with as little theory as possible, such a set of directions and exercises as, even before the pupil has attained the maturity of mind necessary for the formal study of rhetoric, will enable him to become a tolerably correct composer; at least to avoid the blunders, if not to acquire the graces, of composition.

By the time the pupil has passed over the exercises in punctuation, transformation of elements, and rhetorical principles, he should have secured a fair degree of accuracy. Whatever additional practice may be necessary will be found in the Reproductions. These Reproductions are of course primarily intended to furnish material for practice upon the principles that are under discussion. Another and hardly less important purpose is to furnish the first step in a graded system of exercises leading to original composition. All writers have learned to write by seeing how others have written. The music pupil learns to execute what others have composed before he is set to composing for himself. In putting into his own words a poem, or a story, or a chapter of history, the pupil learns to select the proper

points, to arrange well, to connect clearly, to adapt diction to thought, etc. This he will learn to a large extent unconsciously, but on many of these important points he will fail, and these failures will furnish the teacher with proper subjects of criticism.

The second step toward original writing is found in the Developments. This is half way between the wholly reproductive and the wholly original. Here the imagination is called into play in supplying the details of a plot, only the outlines of which are given. The Development furnishes also a severe test of style, for it gives absolutely no aid. If the pupil now shows that he does not yet comprehend the difference between good writing and poor, more practice should be given in Reproduction. The Developments will afford opportunity for the teacher to point out lack of harmony between the additions the pupil has made and the plot given, violations of correct proportion, inconsistencies of detail, faults of diction, etc. To several of the first Developments, hints have been added to guide and encourage the pupil. It will, however, be well to give him as little aid as possible. The more independent he is in his treatment of the Developments, the better prepared will he be for the original themes. But to such individual pupils as are most deficient in imagination, the aid of additional hints may properly be continued longer than to the others. With this preliminary training, there will be an easy transition to simple imaginative themes.

The Development is the exact opposite of the Repro-



## PREFACE.

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duction. The Development adds the details, the Reproduction omits them; the matter furnished for the Development is much shorter than the required essay, the matter furnished for the Reproduction is much longer.

The next step beyond the Reproduction in the line of condensation is the Summary. The matter given for the Summary is much greater than for the Reproduction, and the required essay may be made shorter. The object of the Summary is brevity of expression and grasp of thought. If these various exercises be at first applied to easy matter, stories, simple poems, etc., the pupil will be able to apply them with great advantage, in a more advanced part of his course, to the more difficult subjects of history, science, orations, etc.

The Paraphrase deals exclusively with style. The passage given is short; the pupil is obliged to concentrate his efforts on the best ways of re-expressing it. The excellence of this exercise no experienced teacher will doubt. Dr. Harris says, "One increases rapidly in the command of language when he is required to paraphrase, and to discover the advantages and disadvantages of the modes of expression used by himself and others."

The imaginative faculty is usually sufficiently lively to make it early available in furnishing the material for writing,—material pleasing to the pupil and adapted to his years. But even if he does not at first succeed in imaginative work, let his efforts be judiciously guided and encouraged, and he will make the same improvement in this as in any other line of study. Imaginative is

placed before descriptive writing; and it is believed that this arrangement is philosophical. As treated in this book, descriptive writing is the more difficult. As the pupil has doubtless had in the lower grades some practice in the description of simple objects, it is thought practicable to advance to themes offering more variety and more pleasure, but requiring more maturity of thought and style.

This work, undertaken at first to supply the author a series of exercises for oral instruction, is in every respect an outgrowth of the class-room, and it is believed that in other hands it will stand the only true test of a school-book,—the test of trial.

The author desires to acknowledge most gratefully her indebtedness, for assistance and encouragement during the progress of the work, to Supt. W. S. Perry; and Prof. W. H. Payne, of Michigan University.

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THE AUTHOR.

ANN ARBOR, June 23, 1884.

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