

# Kolbe Academy Home School

## GRADE EIGHT CLASSICAL COMPOSITION *Classical Composition, English Composition VII Common Topics Stage*

*(This is a semester-length course)*

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**COURSE TITLE:** English Composition VII: Common Topic Stage

**Note:** *Classical Composition Discovering the Skills of Writing Common Topic* is the fifth course representing the seventh stage in the Classical Composition sequence. It should be undertaken after completing *Classical Composition Fable, Narrative, Chreia/Maxim, and Confirmation/Refutation*.

**COURSE TEXTS:**

- *Classical Composition Discovering the Skills of Writing Common Topic Teacher Guide*, (CTG)
- *Classical Composition Discovering the Skills of Writing Common Topic Student Book* (CTSB)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

The **Common Topic Stage** is the seventh of fourteen stages in the *Progymnasmata* (However it is the fifth course) in the set of preparatory exercises originated by the Greeks to ready the student for rhetoric. Students will learn to write by learning how to examine a common evil deed (at this stage). The teacher will ask questions to help the student develop a Prologue, Contrary, Exposition, Comparison, Intention, Digression, Rejection of Pity, and the six Heads of Purpose that support the punishment of the one who committed the evil deed. In doing so the student will develop his powers to analyze and reason. He will also get a taste of forming moral judgments. The instructional method and exercises remain the same from one week to the next and are clearly outlined in the *Teacher Guide*. The step by step guidance and questions that the parent/teacher asks to help the student write the Common Topic are in the *Teacher Guide*.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

- ❖ Develop in the student an appreciation for sound writing
- ❖ Inculcate in the student the habits of good writers through imitation of their structure and style
- ❖ Provide techniques the student writer can employ for any given writing task
- ❖ Prepare the student writer to generate ideas, organize those ideas, and express those ideas well by providing him with structured practice in **Invention** (generating ideas), **Arrangement** (organizing ideas), and **Decoration** (stating the ideas in their most effective form) (**Discovery, Organization, and Elocution**)
- ❖ Develop a shared vocabulary and practice between the teacher and student

**SCOPE AND SEQUENCE:**

The *Progymnasmata* exercises were a preliminary series of exercises for students who would later study rhetoric and deliver formal orations. The exercises were developed by the ancients, adopted by the Church, perfected in the Renaissance, and practiced by the West until very recently. The sequence below is based on the exercises of Aphthonius, an ancient Greek rhetorician.

- |                    |                 |                   |                         |
|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Fable           | 5. Refutation   | 9. Invective      | 13. Thesis or Theme     |
| 2. Narrative       | 6. Confirmation | 10. Comparison    | 14. Defend/Attack a Law |
| 3. Chreia          | 7. Commonplace  | 11. Impersonation |                         |
| 4. Proverb (Maxim) | 8. Encomium     | 12. Description   |                         |

**COURSE PLAN METHODOLOGY:**

Kolbe Academy has worked diligently to create the best possible course plans with the home schooling family in mind. Remember, however, that our program is intended to be flexible. Under the principle of subsidiarity, you should use these course plans as a **suggested** course of study. As the teacher, you should adapt and modify these course plans to meet the individual learning needs of your child. In the course plans that follow, the *Classical Composition Discovering the Skills of Writing Common Topic Teacher Guide* is represented by the abbreviation **CTTG**, the *Student Book* by the abbreviation **CTSB**. A weekly grade book is included in the course plan at the end of each week as a convenience; it is a suggestion, not a prescription. Point values and weighting are suggested for convenience and may be modified, dropped completely, or added to as the parent deems fit. Because the Classical Composition course is a self-contained program, we advise you to follow the grading guidelines outlined in the text. You may elect to grade drafts or not. **Kolbe Academy does not require that you keep a record of all student work.** If you intend to report your child's work to Kolbe Academy for an official report card, only one sample of graded written work is required per quarter for each course, along with the submission of a report card. Please consult the welcome packet for a full tutorial on grades and quarter reports. Finally, begin every class with a prayer. This is a good way to help the child memorize new prayers. Repeat the same ones every day until they are known. Be sure to explain the meanings of the prayers. Repetition in all areas of study is most beneficial.

Please note that this course only takes a total of 28 weeks to complete unlike most Kolbe Academy courses that take 36 weeks.

#### **TEACHER PREPARATION:**

1. Reading the Teaching Guidelines at the front of the *Common Topic* book should be sufficient to prepare you to teach this course, because it builds on everything mastered in Fable, Narrative, and Chreia/Maxim; and because the directions are clearly laid out in step-by-step fashion. The ideas found in the "Teaching Guidelines", "Grading Sheets", "Definition of Terms", and "Introduction to Refutation-Confirmation" can be absorbed in an hour's time.
2. Kolbe Academy has written *Common Topic Preparatory Notes* as a sort of one-stop reference for Common Topic. It follows on the next few pages.

## COMMON TOPIC PREPARATORY NOTES

Teacher and student alike will enjoy developing the Common Topic exercises. The Common Topic stage does not correspond exactly to a style or genre in modern process writing, but might be called a descriptive essay; in truth, Common Topic is unique to Classical Composition. The Common Topic is a call to develop one's reasoning power to detect and expose tyranny and other intolerable moral states. The exercises are based on an implied understanding of law, freedom, duty, and justice. As such, the first role of the Common Topic exercises is to expose the abuses of the tyrant or one who has violated the law. The exercises are more provocative than previous exercises—for who could counsel complacency in the face of tyranny?

The Heads of Purpose for Common Topic are **1) Common Topic**: The first exercise begins by discussing an evil deed. An example is a sentry who falls asleep at his post; **2) Prologue**: The prologue begins the formal writing and includes a thesis statement that calls for the punishment of the wrongdoer. Students will compose their own variation of the basic answer provided in the text; **3) Contrary**: The contrary is a narrative that describes the opposite of the wrongdoer's actions; **4) Exposition**: The exposition calls attention to the fact that the wrongdoer behaved in the opposite manner expressed in the contrary. It also describes the thoughts of the wrongdoer as an extended version of *sermocinatio* (speaking in the manner of someone else but in first person as though you are the person); **5) Comparison**: This exercise compares the crime committed with another type of evil deed; **6) Intention**: This exercise discredits the intent of the wrongdoer; **7) Digression**: This exercise describes how the wrongdoer must have lived in the past. **8) Rejection of Pity**: This exercise asks whether anyone would plead for the wrongdoer's pardon; and **9) Heads of Purpose**: The final exercise gives six arguments that support the punishment of the wrongdoer. These Heads of Purpose are legality, justice, expediency, possibility, honor, and consequence.

One of the nicest aspects of Common Topic is that students will think about real-world dilemmas. After studying Aphthonius' words *Against a Tyrant*, they will write *Against Drunk Drivers*, *Against Abortionists*, *Against a Leader Who Puts Personal Revenge Above Duty*, *Against a Sentry Who Falls Asleep*, *Against a Patricide*, *Against a Cheater*, *Against a President Who Lies Under Oath*, *Against a Gossip*, and *Against a Murmur*. As you can see, Common Topic will expand a student's writing and reasoning abilities.

In composing the exercises for Common Topic it is helpful to know the purposes of writing. Classical Language Theory which is concerned with arriving at the truth divides purpose into questions dealing with the past, the present, and the future. Of the past it asks what was or was not or forensic questions, of the present it asks what is or is not or epideictic questions, and of the future it asks what will or will not be or deliberative questions. A speaker or writer will communicate more effectively and organize his views more convincingly if he knows the purpose behind his words. Because Common Topic takes the past for its subject matter it is suited to helping the student learn how to generate the kinds of questions needed for forensic discovery. The best way to gain an appreciation for what Common Topic can teach is to read Aphthonius *Against Tyrants* the model put forward to help students (You'll find it below.). Parent and student will examine it in Lesson 1.

**Aphthonius: Against Tyrants (with component parts and Heads of Purpose labeled)****Prologue w/ two Heads of Purpose:**

*Since laws are established and courts are part of our constitution the man who tries to put an end to laws should be punished by the laws (Thesis). For if acquittal in the present case was going to make him more friendly to the people in the future perhaps one would remit the penalty; but in fact, if acquitted now, he will be more oppressive in the future—and how can it be right to allow leniency towards this man to be the beginning of tyranny? (Propriety) All other who are chosen for jury-service come to no harm if they dismiss the charges; but dismissing a charge of tyranny will bring harm on the jurors, for jury-service itself no longer survives under a tyrant's rule. (Expediency)*

**The Contrary (A narrative paragraph) (The six narrative questions are marked.)**

*It seems to me that you will form a more accurate view of this man's intent if you take into account the intentions of our ancestors (Who). As if as a favor to us (Who) they discovered a form of government free of despotism (What)—and justly so. For at different times different fortunes befall men and change the way they think (When and Where). So they invented laws, correcting fortune's instability by the impartiality of laws; and so they produced a single standard of judgment for all (How). And this is what law is for cities, the correction of evils caused by fortune (Why).*

**The Exposition (Including a sentence in contrast to the preceding contrary and an extended use of *sermocinatio*.)**

*All of which this man disregarded when he devised a most diabolical plan, to change the constitution's basic law. This is how he spoke to himself: 'That is this, in heaven's name! Shall I, who clearly stand above the masses, consent to outright equality with all the rest? Shall I permit fortune to lavish wealth on me in vain? If I submit to the same conditions as the masses, and the poor assemble to take decisions, then the resolution of the masses is a law to me. So what will be my deliverance from this? I will seize the acropolis, I will set aside these miserable laws, and I will be a law to the masses, not the majority to me.' That is what he said to himself—but he did not bring it to fulfillment; the favor of the gods prevented that. Do not let something for which we owe the gods thanksgiving preserve this man today (Purpose--Propriety).*

**The Comparison (which attaches greater weight to the charge through juxtaposition)**

*A murderer is terrible, but a tyrant is worse. The one commits butchery on some single individual, but the other overthrows in their entirety the fortunes of the city. To the degree that inflicting a little pain falls short of butchering all, to that degree a murderer is of less consequence than a tyrant.*

**The Intention (discredits the intent of the agent)**

*All other men, no matter how heinous their crimes, can make a distinction between their intention and their action; the tyrant alone cannot claim that his reckless enterprise was involuntary. For if he had undertaken tyranny against his will perhaps one would remit the penalty; but since he did this deliberately, how can it be right to exempt what had, before the deed, come about in intention?*

**The Digression (abuses the tyrant’s previous life)**

*All other men who are brought for judgment before you are held to account for the present only, and they are often acquitted on account of their past life. This man alone is subject to judgment for his past as well as for his present life. He did not live his past life with moderation; the present is worse than what preceded it. He should be punished for both, for the pain he caused before and for the pain he has subsequently caused.*

**The Rejection of Pity:**

*Who, then, will plead for his freedom? ‘By god, his children.’ But when they weep and wail picture the laws standing by them; it is far more just to cast your vote for them than for this man’s children. For this man’s children would have sustained his tyranny, but it is because of the laws that you serve on the jury. You are more bound in justice to cast your vote for the laws, through which you have received your places on the jury.*

**The Heads of Purpose: legality, justice, expediency, possibility, honor, consequence:**

*Moreover, if it is the law that those who free their country be honored, it follows that those who enslave it are to be punished. And it is just that the penalty should be fixed on your part equal to what he himself has done. The fall of the tyrant will do good, since it will make the laws secure. It is easy to bring about this man’s punishment; for though he needed bodyguards to establish his tyranny, you have no need of allies to overthrow the tyrant. The jurymen’s vote will suffice to bring to nothing the power of tyranny in its entirety.*

**COMMON TOPIC COMPONENTS INCLUDING HEADS OF PURPOSE & DEVELOPMENT**

<p><b>1. PROLOGUE</b> Thesis Head of Purpose: Consequence (stated in a rhetorical question) Head of Purpose: (Expediency)</p>	<p><b>5. INTENTION</b> Head of Purpose: Possibility Head of Purpose: Justice</p>
<p><b>2. CONTRARY</b> Head of Purpose: (Honor) Head of Development: (Cause) Head of Development: (Epilogue)</p>	<p><b>6. DIGRESSION</b> Head of Purpose: Legality Converse Head of Purpose: Justice</p>
<p><b>3. EXPOSITION</b> Head of Purpose: (Possibility) Head of Development: (Cause, including the six narrative components and recognition, reversal, and suffering) Head of Development: (Epilogue) Head of Purpose: (Honor)</p>	<p><b>7. REJECTION OF PITY</b> Head of Purpose: Honor (Counter Argument) Head of Purpose: Justice Head of Purpose: Justice</p>
<p><b>4. COMPARISON</b> Analogy: Consequence Epilogue</p>	<p><b>8. HEADS OF PURPOSE</b> Legality Justice Expediency Possibility Honor Consequence</p>

◆◆◆ FIRST QUARTER ◆◆◆

WEEK 1		
Book	Weekly Breakdown	Goals and Notes for the Week
CTTG	LESSON ONE COMMON TOPIC	<p><b>Course Goal:</b> To equip each student with all the skills necessary to effectively communicate through written composition and to prepare them for Rhetoric.</p> <p><b>Weekly Goal:</b> As you read the assigned Heads of Purpose for the day, answer student questions about individual words and the overall meaning of the passage.</p> <p><b>Review: <i>sermocinatio</i>:</b> to speak in the first-person as though one is another, adopting his or her manner and style. <i>Sermocinatio</i> is a method by which the writer enters the thought processes of the one imitated.</p> <p><b>Figures of Description: <i>anemographia</i>:</b> vivid description of the wind; <b><i>astrothesia</i>:</b> description of the stars or heavens; <b><i>chorographia</i>:</b> a vivid description of a nation or a group of people collectively; <b><i>chronographia</i>:</b> the vivid representation of a historical period or recurring season to create an illusion of reality;</p> <p><b>Figures of Speech: <i>Enallage</i>:</b> changing the form of a word. i.e. changing a noun to a verb; <b><i>antonomasia</i>:</b> a substitution of a name for another name; it may move from the general to the specific or the specific to the general; <b><i>periphrasis</i>:</b> the substitution of a phrase for a name (an expansion of antonomasia; <b><i>metaphor</i>:</b> transferring the meaning of a word to a new meaning, a comparison without a linking word such as "as" or "like". Example: Life is a journey.</p>
<i>Against a Tyrant: Should anyone be above the law?</i>		
Notes		
Student Daily Assignments		Parent Daily Guidelines
DAY 1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CTSB Answer the Common Topic questions; Paraphrase the Prologue, and Contrary	(The first lesson presents Aphthonius's model for examination.)  <input type="checkbox"/> Ask the Common Topic Questions Have the student write the paraphrase for the Prologue and Contrary.

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DAY 2	CTSB Paraphrase the Exposition and Comparison	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have the student write the paraphrase for the Exposition and Comparison.
DAY 3	CTSB Paraphrase the Intention and Digression	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have the student write the paraphrase for the Intention and Digression.
DAY 4	CTSB Paraphrase the Rejection of Pity and Heads of Purpose	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have the student write the paraphrase for Rejection of Pity and Heads of Purpose.
DAY 5	Write the final draft.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Guide the student through writing the <b>final draft</b> .

**Week 1 Grade Book**

Assignments	<input type="checkbox"/>	(A) Points Earned	(B) Possible Points	A/B x100 =% (C)
Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/>		10	
Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/>		10	
Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/>		10	
Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/>		10	
Day 5: Final Draft	<input type="checkbox"/>		100	
<b>Week 1 Average</b>	Add up column C & divide by number of included <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> assignments =			<b>%</b>

WEEK 2		
Book	Weekly Breakdown	Goals and Notes for the Week
CTTG	LESSON TWO COMMON TOPIC	<p><b>Weekly Goal:</b> As you read the assigned Heads of Purpose for the day, answer student questions about individual words and the overall meaning of the passage.</p> <p><b>Review:</b></p> <p><b>Figures of Description:</b> <i>dendographia</i>: a description of a tree; <i>dialogismus</i>: a dialogue or conversation between two or more characters; <i>effictio</i>: a vivid description of a person’s body; <i>hydrographia</i>: a vivid description of water</p> <p><b>Figures of Speech:</b> <i>metaphor</i>: transferring the meaning of a word to a new meaning, a comparison without a linking word such as “as” or “like”. Example: Life is a journey.; <i>onomatopoeia</i>: a word that captures the sound associated with a thing or animal; <i>synecdoche</i>: using the part to indicate the whole; <i>amplification</i>: replacing a word with a stronger equivalent.</p>
<p><i>Against Drunk Drivers: What should happen to people who act with reckless disregard for others?</i></p>		
<p>Notes</p>		
Student Daily Assignments		Parent Daily Guidelines
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
DAY 1	CTSB Answer the Common Topic questions; Paraphrase the Prologue, and Contrary	<input type="checkbox"/> Guided Discussion: Ask the questions in the Teacher Guide for Common Topic. Guide the student through writing the Prologue, and Contrary. Define terms.
DAY 2	CTSB Paraphrase the Exposition and Comparison	<input type="checkbox"/> Guide the student through writing the Exposition and Comparison.
DAY 3	CTSB Paraphrase the Intention and Digression	<input type="checkbox"/> Guide the student through writing the Intention and Digression.

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<b>DAY 4</b>	<b>CTSB Paraphrase the Rejection of Pity and Heads of Purpose</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Guide the student through writing the Rejection of Pity and Heads of Purpose.	
<b>DAY 5</b>	<b>Write the final draft.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Guide the student through writing the <b>final draft</b> .	
<b>Week 2 Grade Book</b>				
<b>Assignments</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>(A) Points Earned</b>	<b>(B) Possible Points</b>	<b>A/B x100 =% (C)</b>
Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/>		10	
Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/>		10	
Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/>		10	
Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/>		10	
Day 5: Final Draft	<input type="checkbox"/>		100	
<b>Week 2 Average</b>	<b>Add up column C &amp; divide by number of included <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> assignments =</b>			<b>%</b>