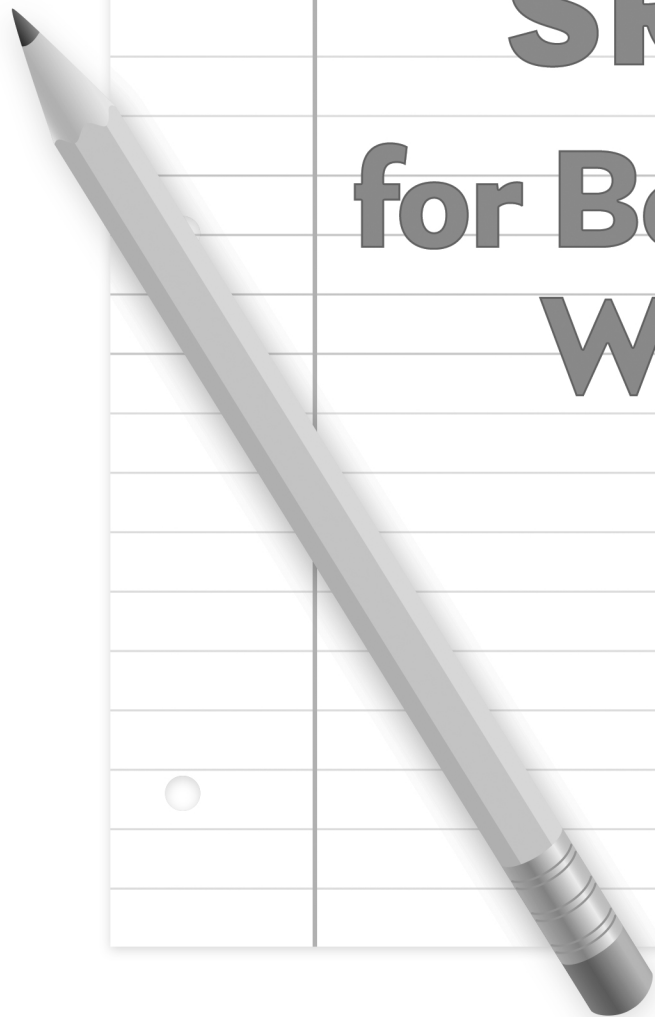


SAMPLE

**ESSENTIAL
SKILLS**

**for Beginning
Writers**



**Ages
11+**

DREW CAMPBELL

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Previously released as *Exploring the World through Story: Writing Skills for Older Beginners*. This version has been lightly edited and reformatted, but the instructional content is identical.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Drew Campbell, Ph.D., has worked in education since the 1980s and holds degrees in German literature and language from Bennington College and Washington University, St. Louis. Dr. Campbell is the author of *Exploring the World through Story*, *Living Memory*, and *I Speak Latin*, and co-author of *How to Homeschool the Kids You Have: Advice from the Kitchen Table*. A former homeschooling parent, classroom teacher, and school administrator, she now works as an independent curriculum developer at Stone Soup Press.

Essential Skills for Beginning Writers Overview

- For students ages 11+
- Reviews fundamental academic writing skills
- 24 lessons to be used alongside your main writing curriculum
- Includes dictation and memory work
- Required text: *Best-Loved Folktales of the World*, ed. Joanna Cole

Lesson 4

Checklist

- Read the Study Notes for this lesson.
- Read “Why the Parrot Repeats Man’s Words” on pages 563–565.
- Record any new vocabulary words with their pronunciations and definitions.
- Complete the dictation, and make any necessary corrections.
- Complete the writing assignment.
- Create flashcard(s) for the new memory work.
- Review previous memory work.

Study Notes

Today we have another pourquoi tale, this time from Thailand. The main character is a lorikeet, whose experience in the story explains why parrots mimic human speech.¹

Vocabulary

Use this section to record any new vocabulary words.

¹ Lorikeets are small, colorful birds in the parrot family. They are native to southeast Asia and the Pacific region.

Dictation

Use this section to write your dictation.

Writing

Written Narration

In earlier lessons, we talked about how stories typically have three acts: a beginning, a middle, and an end. Let's think more about how the three acts work. Take a look at the chart below. It gives you some new language for describing the plot of a story.

Act I	Beginning	Somebody wanted... but...	Orientation
Act II	Middle	So...	Complication
Act III	End	Then...	Resolution

The first act sets the stage. We meet the main character and learn about their situation—what they want and what stands in their way. We call this the *orientation* because it helps orient the reader.

The second act consists of the character's attempt to reach their goal. We call this the *complication* because it's where things get complicated! It's also where most of the action happens.

The end of the story shows the results of the character's attempts to achieve their goal—and whether they succeed or fail. This is called the *resolution*.

With this in mind, let's narrate today's story. I'll start by retelling Act I, the orientation.

A talking lorikeet witnessed its owner kill his neighbor's water buffalo. The lorikeet wanted to tell the truth about the crime, but its owner did not want the bird to be believed in court...

I've underlined the key words from our formula for retelling a story. You'll notice that I added an introductory sentence to explain the situation. It's fine to do this if it will help your reader understand what's going on.

Now let's look at the complication. What does the lorikeet's owner do to the bird before the trial? Complete the sentence stem:

...so he hatched a plan to discredit the bird's testimony. He

Finally, let's narrate the third act. What happens during the trial? Describe the action in one or two sentences.

Then _____

_____.

But that's not the end of the story, is it? Just as we added an introductory sentence to help readers understand the situation at the beginning of the story, we need to wrap things up with a sentence or two about the lorikeet and the parrot. After all, the story is called "Why the Parrot Repeats Man's Words," so we can't forget about the parrot! What advice does the lorikeet give the parrot?

There you have it: a written narration of all three acts, plus an introduction and conclusion to tie things together.

Memory Work

Q: What is a clause?

A: A clause is a group of words that has a subject and a verb.

Lesson 4

Checklist

- Read the Study Notes for this lesson.
- Read “Why the Parrot Repeats Man’s Words” on pages 563–565.
- Record any new vocabulary words with their pronunciations and definitions.
- Complete the dictation, and make any necessary corrections.
- Complete the writing assignment.
- Create flashcard(s) for the new memory work.
- Review previous memory work.

Study Notes

Read the Study Notes in the Student Worktext with your student.

Reading

Read the day’s text with your student.

Vocabulary

Use this section to note down any new vocabulary words you want your student to look up.

Dictation

Before delivering the dictation, review the rules for punctuating direct speech with your child.

The lorikeet said, “Repeat his words and nothing more. For man loves to hear only his own thoughts repeated. He is not interested in truth or wisdom from any other source.”

Writing

Written Narration (Narrative Summary)

Today’s assignment introduces language to describe the function of the three acts: *orientation, complication, resolution*. It also shows students how to add an introduction and conclusion to tie their narration together. This structure—introduction, three points, conclusion—mirrors both a simple paragraph and the classic five-paragraph essay. It is introduced here as an anchor point for later instruction.

Here is what a sample narration might look like. (Student work appears in italics.)

A talking lorikeet witnessed its owner kill his neighbor’s water buffalo. The lorikeet wanted to tell the truth about the crime, but its owner did not want the bird to be believed in court, so he hatched a plan to discredit the bird’s testimony. He put the bird in a pot and made noises that sounded like a thunderstorm. Then, at the trial, after the lorikeet had accused his owner of the crime, the man told the judge to ask the lorikeet about the weather the night before. The bird said it was dark and stormy, so the judge did not believe his testimony about the crime. When the lorikeet met the parrot, he advised it not to tell the truth, and that is why the parrot only repeats man’s words.

Memory Work

Continue to review the student’s memory work with them at the end of each lesson.

Q: What is a clause?

A: A clause is a group of words that has a subject and a verb.