

Preparation for Language Arts Skills
for High School and Beyond

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✚ **The long-standing belief in the value of language arts:**

- AD 401 in "The Confessions of Saint Augustine" - "For those first lessons, reading, writing and arithmetic, I thought as great a burden and penalty as any Greek."
- 17th century New England - "The curriculum of the common schools may be summed up in the four R's Reading, Riting, Rithmetic and Religion..."
- 1795, during a speech made at a Board of education dinner, Englishman Sir William Curtis - "From reading and writing comes the idea in modern education of literacy, by which we generally mean having the ability to understand ideas expressed through the medium of words."

✚ **The two undeniable fundamentals of Language Arts:**

- *Reading*: the ability to understand ideas expressed through the medium of words
- *Writing*: the ability to effectively communicate ideas through the medium of words

✚ **Two truths you cannot avoid:**

- 1) Your curriculum **must** emphasize 1) critical reading and 2) effective writing skills.
- 2) Augustine did not like learning these skills. Maybe your students won't either!

Preparatory Skills for Reading Literature

Read

- encourage daily reading for pleasure (student's choice)
- require short-term reading assignments – use short stories or novellas, thousands are free online
- require longer-term reading assignments – novels, both classic and popular
 - compare book and movie versions of novels
- review and discuss all reading and literature assignments

Experience

- listen to literature
 - use a free audio book service via your library
 - Audible.com
- Go to community theatre productions
 - enroll in a drama class

Skills

- expand vocabulary through reading
- encourage students to mark interesting passages for discussion
- learn vocabulary terms and identify them when reading
- require students to find literary answers to literary questions
 - external conflict and themes
 - Internal conflict and characterization

Preparatory Skills for Effective Writing

A three-legged stool for a firm foundation.

First leg - **academic essays** - with a focus on content comprehension and structure, must include a technique called “the 5-paragraph essay.”

Second leg - **journalism** - with a focus on natural voice, readability and reader interest. Personal *journaling* or *blogging* can be an effective alternative.

Third leg - **literature short and long answers** - with a focus on reading comprehension and analysis on specific literary-focused questions.

✚ Two more truths you must embrace...

1. *Correct* writing (grammar et al.) may not prove to be *effective* writing – writing that fully accomplishes the goals of the required assignment.
2. *Effective* writing always achieves both the *comprehension* and the *communication* goals of the writing assignment.

Basic pre-writing skills

- brainstorming/idea generation
 - researching
 - organizing
 - documenting
- mind mapping
finding and evaluating quality sources
strategies for structuring information
paraphrasing and plagiarism

Basic writing skills

- drafting
 - editing
- type paper from a completed writing plan using a standard 5-paragraph essay format
rewriting to insure paper is simple , concise and direct; read aloud for voice

Basic proofreading skills (always proofread from printed copy, not the screen)

- *basic* grammar, et al.
 - Formatting
 - fact checking
 - citations
- punctuation, capitalization, spelling
indents, double spacing, margins, images
names, dates, numbers,
quotes, paraphrasing, footnotes, Works Cited, Bibliography