

English Composition VII: Common Topic Stage

Exercises for Descriptive Essays

By

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Composition Curriculum

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Progymnasmata: Stage Seven

Common Topic

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Introduction: Common Topic

This set of exercises, Common Topic, is more difficult to categorize by modern composition theory but would likely fall under the descriptive essay. The students are learning how to amplify evil attributes. They will use all of the previous skills learned in the exercises—narrative, expository and argumentative. The art of Grammar instructs us to use both imitation and repetition in our quest to master facts. This essay form, taught through the following ten exercises, must be with occasional integration into the other subjects in order to ensure continued mastery. A essay assignment using this common topic form to describe an evil character from Scripture or a Bible lesson as well as history lessons will help immensely.

Aphthonius writes the following on Common Topic:

A common topic is a discourse that amplifies evil attributes. It is so called because it applies equally to all those who participate in the same action; e.g., the discourse against a traitor is applicable equally to all those who have a share in that activity.

It resembles a second speech and an epilogue. For this reason the common topic does not have a prologue, although we adumbrate prologues in order to train the young. After that you will place the first head, from the contrary; then you will adduce the exposition - not in order to explain, since the facts are known, but to provoke the audience; then you will adduce the comparison, attaching greater weight to the charge through juxtaposition; then the head called intention, discrediting the intent of the agent; then a digression, conjecturally abusing his previous life; then the rejection of pity; and to complete this preliminary exercise the heads of purpose: legality, justice, expediency, possibility, honor, consequence.

As we have come to expect Aphthonius does not explain the headings of the essay beyond the above but he does give an example of the Common Topic exercise that the students are to imitate. We have included Aphthonius' model below. We then divide the model into the heads and conclude with comments before proceeding to the teaching procedures.

Common topic: against a tyrant

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. 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? All others 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.

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. As if as a favor to us they discovered a form of government free of despotism - and justly so. For at different times different fortunes befall men and change they way they think. So they invented laws, correcting fortune's instability by the

impartiality of laws; and so they produced a single standard of judgment for all. And this is what law is for cities, the correction of evils caused by fortune.

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: 'What 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.

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.

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?

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.

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.

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: against a tyrant

Adumbrated prologue

This sketchy prologue sets out with a thesis statement and then two heads of purpose (identified in the text below) or arguments. The thesis statement calls for punishment of the tyrant. The heads of purpose, the second and third sentences, call on the jury not to acquit or dismiss on the respective bases of propriety and expedience.

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 statement). 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 others 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

Here the skills developed in the contrast heading of the Chreia are called upon. The student is asked for a contrary narrative paragraph based upon the assumed narrative of the tyrant. In the exercise outline the student will be asked to answer the six narrative questions.

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 they 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).

then you will adduce the exposition - not in order to explain, since the facts are known, but to provoke the audience.

Aphthonius begins with a sentence in contrast with the preceding contrary heading and then an extended figure of sermocinatio: a complete first person dialogue that allows or forces an audience (and student!) to enter into the thought process of the evil character. The purpose is to provoke the audience and then the exposition is concluded with a head of purpose.

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: 'What 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).

then you will adduce the comparison, attaching 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.

Intention, discrediting 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?

then a **digression**, conjecturally abusing his 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.

then **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.

and to complete this preliminary exercise **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.

Definition of terms

Action—corresponds to the narrative question “what?”

Agent—corresponds to the narrative question “who?”

Analogy—resemblance of relations or attributes as a ground of reasoning. A figure identifying similarities found in dissimilar ideas.

Anecdote--a concise reminiscence aptly referring to some person. It is called anecdote [*chreia*] because it is useful [*chreiôdes*].

Cause—1) corresponds to the narrative question “why?” 2) a heading in the Chreia

"Chreia" (from the Greek *chreiodes*, "useful") is "a brief reminiscence referring to some person in a pithy form for the purpose of edification." It takes the form of an anecdote that reports either a saying, an edifying action, or both.

Clarity—a source of argument introduced in the Refutation stage and is renamed in Common Topic as a Head of Purpose labeled as Consequence.

Consistency-- a source of argument introduced in the Refutation stage and is renamed in Common Topic as a Head of Purpose labeled as Justice.

Converse—a form of words derived from another by the transposition of two antithetical members; a thing or action which is the exact opposite of another.

Copia--a full body or plethora of language which has been internalized and is, as a result, available to the writer.

Encomium—a formal expression of praise.

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ETC.

Teaching Procedure

1. Read to the students Aphthonius' introduction. Explain these lessons are exercises and they are learning how to thoroughly describe an evil action. This skill does not come naturally and must be taught through imitation and repetition.
2. Define or explain any uncertain terms in Aphthonius' introduction. A complete understanding of the ideas will come as the students work through the exercises.
3. Determine if the students have any questions about meaning, first relative to vocabulary then as a whole. For unknown words ask the students to attempt a tentative definition from the context. Have excellent dictionaries available for the students to look up the uncertain words. Rarely tell them the meaning of a word. Possible vocabulary words would include contradict, provoke, inventing, absurd, contempt, and patron.
4. Review the nature of a tyranny. Some review of history and discussion of particular tyrants may be helpful.
5. Read through Aphthonius' model. Have one of the students paraphrase each paragraph orally. You may need to do this one sentence at a time. Note the paragraph by paragraph instructions below.
6. Read the first paragraph of Aphthonius' model on the Tyrant. The teacher may read or have one of the students read. Contrast the difference between the praising or dispraising paragraphs students have learned in the preceding stages with the adumbrated prologue of the common topic. For the adumbrated prologue ask the students to identify the heads of purpose used by Aphthonius. When the students write their adumbrated prologues they will have the choice of which heads of purpose they use but they will be required to use at least three.

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ETC.

Grading Sheet for Common Topic

Student:

Common Topic Title:

Points

Adumbrated Prologue:

_____/10

Logic/Clarity of thought
Vocabulary/Diction/Spelling/Grammar
Style/Word variation/Sentence structure

Contrariety:

_____/10

Logic/Clarity of thought
Vocabulary/Diction/Spelling/Grammar
Style/Word variation/Sentence structure

Exposition:

_____/10

Logic/Clarity of thought
Vocabulary/Diction/Spelling/Grammar
Style/Word variation/Sentence structure

Comparison:

_____/10

Logic/Clarity of thought
Vocabulary/Diction/Spelling/Grammar
Style/Word variation/Sentence structure

Intention:

_____/10

Logic/Clarity of thought
Vocabulary/Diction/Spelling/Grammar
Style/Word variation/Sentence structure

Digression:

_____/10

Logic/Clarity of thought
Vocabulary/Diction/Spelling/Grammar
Style/Word variation/Sentence structure

Rejection of Pity: _____/10

Logic/Clarity of thought
Vocabulary/Diction/Spelling/Grammar
Style/Word variation/Sentence structure

Heads of Purpose: _____/10

Logic/Clarity of thought
Vocabulary/Diction/Spelling/Grammar
Style/Word variation/Sentence structure

Persuasiveness: _____/10

Oral Presentation _____/10

Total _____/100

Comments:

SP—spelling error
Frag—sentence fragment
RO—run on sentence
O—(circled item) missing or incorrect punctuation
IP—new paragraph needed
DT—diction error

Lesson 1: Paraphrase of the Tyrant (Five days)

Goal: To equip each student with all the skills necessary to effectively communicate through written and oral composition and to prepare them for Rhetoric.

Purpose: To master the seventh stage of the Progymnasmata, Common Topic, by learning, understanding and utilizing the eight steps of constructing this descriptive essay.

To review the skills mastered in Narrative, Fable, Chreia and Maxim, Refutation and Confirmation.

Objectives:

- Students will discuss the Common Topic and develop ideas for each paragraph.
- Students will develop an adumbrated prologue paragraph with a thesis and two heads of purpose that set forth the matter at hand.
- Students will develop a paragraph that sets out a contrary paragraph (reduced narrative) of the matter using the six narrative questions and at least one figure of description.
- Students will develop a paragraph that sets out an exposition paragraph (reduced narrative) of the matter using a first person dialogue and the six narrative questions and at least one figure of description, not to explain but to provoke the audience.
- Students will develop a paragraph that compares the matter with a lesser evil through juxtaposition.
- Students will develop a paragraph that discredits the intent of the agent.
- Students will develop a paragraph that conjecturally abuses the previous life of the agent.
- Students will develop a paragraph that advocates the rejection of pity.
- Students will correctly conclude with paragraph utilizing the six heads of purpose.
- Students will practice their “copia” through variation drills.

Aphthonius writes the following on Common Topic:

A common topic is a discourse that amplifies evil attributes. It is so called because it applies equally to all those who participate in the same action; e.g., the discourse against a traitor is applicable equally to all those who have a share in that activity.

It resembles a second speech and an epilogue. For this reason the common topic does not have a prologue, although we adumbrate prologues in order to train the young. After that you will place the first head, from the contrary; then you will adduce the exposition - not in order to explain, since the facts are known, but to provoke the audience; then you will adduce the comparison, attaching greater weight to the charge through juxtaposition; then the head called intention, discrediting the intent of the agent; then a digression, conjecturally abusing his previous life; then the rejection of pity; and to complete this preliminary exercise the heads of purpose: legality, justice, expediency, possibility, honor, consequence.

Aphthonius’ model follows with his direction inserted before the appropriate paragraphs:

Common topic: against a tyrant

Adumbrated prologue

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 others 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

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 they way they think (When and Where). So they invented laws, correcting fortune's instability by the impartiality of laws [ecphrasis]; 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).

then you will adduce the exposition - not in order to explain, since the facts are known, but to provoke the audience.

All of which this man (Who) disregarded when he devised a most diabolical plan, to change the constitution's basic law (What). This is how he spoke to himself (When and Where): 'What 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 [chorographia] to take decisions, then the resolution of the masses is a law to me (Why). So what will be my deliverance from this? I will seize the acropolis, I will set aside these miserable laws (How), and I will be a law to the masses, not the majority to me (Why).' 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).

then you will adduce the comparison, attaching 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.

Intention, discrediting 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?

then a **digression**, conjecturally abusing his 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.

then **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.

and to complete this preliminary exercise **the heads of purpose: legality, justice, expediency, possibility, honor, consequence**

Moreover, if it is the law that those who free their country be honored (honor or propriety), it follows that those who enslave it are to be punished (legality or plausibility). And it is just that the penalty should be fixed on your part equal to what he himself has done (justice or consistency). The fall of the tyrant will do good, since it will make the laws secure (expediency). 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 (possibility). The juryman's vote will suffice to bring to nothing the power of tyranny in its entirety (consequence or clarity).

Day One (55 minutes): (See items seven through ten in the teaching procedure)

Read through the first four paragraphs of Aphthonius' model. Point out the characteristics and requirements of each paragraph. Staying within the parameters of the model brainstorm other ideas that could have been used or developed in the exercise. The students are to paraphrase these first four paragraphs using the outline in their workbooks. If time is available students may begin and even finish writing in class. These four paragraphs are due the next day.

Day Two (55 minutes): (See items eleven through fourteen in the teaching procedure)

Have the students peer edit the first four paragraphs using the grading sheet and utilizing the error symbols. The editor must put his/her name on the grading sheet and will be graded for their effort and skill. Be available for questions

Read through the finally four paragraphs of Aphthonius' model. Point out the characteristics and requirements of each paragraph. Staying within the parameters of the model brainstorm other ideas that could have been used or developed in the exercise. The students are

to paraphrase these final four paragraphs using the outline in their workbooks. If time is available students may begin and even finish writing in class. These four paragraphs are due the next day.

Day Three (55 minutes):

Have the students peer edit the final four paragraphs using the grading sheet and utilizing the error symbols. The editor must put his/her name on the grading sheet and will be graded for their effort and skill. Be available for questions.

The students are to write the final copy using their peer edited drafts and the outline in their workbooks. If time is available students may begin and even finish writing in class. The final draft is due the next day.

Day Four (55 minutes):

(30 minutes suggested): Using the following sentence, or one of your choice, the students will vary using figures of speech (see Appendix B) and figures of description.

This man alone is subject to judgment for his past as well as for his present life.

Students must identify at the end of each varied sentence the figures they have used. Take the final ten minutes of this time and have the students exchange papers and review each other's variations (five minutes). Students may challenge individual varied sentences and judgment may be rendered by class consensus or by the teacher (five minutes). The student with the most sentences wins and their name is put on the Board until next week's contest.

(25 minutes suggested): Begin oral presentations of the exercise essay. The oral presentations will continue through Day Five. Depending on class size the entire class may have time to present each week. This situation is the ideal. With larger classes half may present one week and the other half the following week or the division may even need to be by thirds or quarters. Another possibility with large classes is to break up into several smaller groups. Students should be instructed to use the Oral Presentation Grading Guide (permission to make copies granted) or at least the headings of the guide. At this point we are not teaching the art of Rhetoric as such and so we are more concerned with basic skills such as eye contact¹, ease of presentation, pace and annunciation, etc. than with the finer points of presentation. However, students should be encouraged to present from memory whenever courage allows and to rely as little as possible on the text.

Day Five (55 minutes): Continue oral presentations.

¹ The exception we make is with Scripture. God's written Word should be read without error and so total concentration should be utilized in any public reading. All attention, both speaker and audience, should be on the Scripture and, therefore, eye contact is unnecessary and may even be a distraction.

Common Topic Worksheet

Adumbrated prologue:

- General statement introducing the broad topic
- The first sentence is the thesis sentence
- Mention the common topic—the evil deed
- Call for punishment and tell why
- Develop with two heads of purpose

Contrary:

- Paint picture of the right situation
- That is opposite to the common topic, e.g. rule by law vs. tyranny, which should be recognized by the students as a converse paragraph from the Chreia/Maxim stages.
- Use the narrative format and identify the six components

Exposition- not in order to explain, since the facts are known, but to provoke the audience

- Develop a narrative, a story in the first person (sermocinatio), telling who, what, when, where, how, and why the crime unfolded in order to provoke your audience.
- Use the narrative format and identify the six components

Comparison-attaching greater weight to the charge through juxtaposition.

- Mention a similar but lesser evil and explain how the common topic is worse based on its consequences.

Intention-discrediting the intent of the agent;

- Argue that the crime was deliberate or premeditated.
- Call for punishment on this basis.

Digression- conjecturally abusing his previous life;

- Construct a story of past misdeeds.
- Call for punishment based on past as well as present crimes.

The rejection of pity:

- Tell who might plead for leniency.
- Explain why their pleas should be rejected.

The heads of purpose:

1. **Legality (plausible):** point to the laws.
2. **Justice (consistency):** argue for the punishment fitting the crime.
3. **Expediency:** tell of the good that will be accomplished through the criminal's removal.
4. **Possibility:** argue for ease to punish
5. **Honor (propriety):** show how carrying out the punishment brings honor.
6. **Consequence (clarity):** sum up the benefit derived from the recommended punishment.

Compose:

Adumbrated prologue: Thesis and heads of purpose: (Choose two)

Thesis: _____

2. _____

3. _____

Contrary: Identify the following and use one figure of description.

Agent (who) _____

Action (what) _____

Time (when) _____

Place (where) _____

Manner (how) _____

Cause (why) _____

Exposition - not in order to explain, since the facts are known, but to provoke the audience. Use a first person dialogue. Identify the following and use one figure of description.

Agent (who) _____

Action (what) _____

Time (when) _____

Place (where) _____

Manner (how) _____

Cause (why) _____

Comparison, attaching greater weight to the charge through juxtaposition.

Intention, discrediting the intent of the agent;

Digression, conjecturally abusing his previous life;

The rejection of pity

The heads of purpose:

1. Legality (plausibility): _____

2. Justice (consistency): _____

3. Expediency: _____

4. Possibility: _____

5. Honor (propriety): _____

6. Consequence (clarity): _____

Appendix A

Figures of Description

Figures of Description

The figures of description identified by Giddeon Burton² and used in these Progymnasmata exercises serve a number of purposes. First and probably foremost the students begin to practically isolate an idea in their mind, whether of a tree, a period of time, or a person's body, and describe it with words. This task seems a simple one and yet it is at the heart of the communication process. The students through practical exercise learn that an idea may be described in a number of ways and that the words are not the thing itself but tools used by the student to communicate his idea to others. They are learning in a simple form to engage the imagination of their audience through vivid, effective images produced by words.

Anemographia: Creating an illusion of reality through description of the wind. The description of wind runs the gamete from gentle breezes to hurricanes. Descriptions might include any of the five senses, that is, we experience wind by sight, sound, touch, smell and even taste. Direct perception as well as the use of similes and metaphors might be used.

Astrothesia: A vivid description of stars. Descriptions might include any of the five senses, that is, we describe stars sight, sound, touch, smell and even taste. Direct perception as well as the use of similes and metaphors might be used.

Chorographia: The description of a particular nation. A single individual may be described using ethopoeia, ecphrasis, or effictio. With chorographia we are identifying a group and then describing the group just as we would an individual. We can describe the mannerisms, habits or emotional characteristics of a group of individuals—Romans, barbarians, a flock of doves, or a colony of ants; or we can describe physical characteristics of a nation or group of individuals—Scandinavians are blond and tall; or we may describe a group conventionally—Latins are emotional and volatile, Germans are precise and stoic, ants are hardworking and serious.

Chronographia: Vivid representation of a certain historical or recurring time (such as a season, the “Roaring Twenties”, Dark Ages, Golden Age of Athens, time of day—evening, morning, etc.) to create an illusion of reality.

Dendographia: Creating an illusion of reality through vivid description of a tree.

Dialogismus: Speaking as someone else, either to bring in others' points of view into one's own speech or to conduct a pseudo-dialog through taking up an opposing position with oneself.

Ecphrasis: The (often-conventional) description of a person, event, place, season, or other commonplace thing. Such a description might be a black hatted villain, sumptuous feast, frigid winter, busy downtown, etc.

Effictio: The description of a person's body.

² "Silva Rhetoricae," <http://humanities.byu.edu/rhetoric/silva.htm>

Ethopoeia: The description and portrayal of a character (natural propensities, manners and affections, etc.).

Geographia: Vivid representation of the earth or landscape to create an illusion of reality.

Hydrographia: Creating an illusion of reality through vivid description of water.

Mimesis my-mee'-sis: Gk. "imitation." Also spelled Mimisis, imitatio, description of sayings-- Greek name for the rhetorical pedagogy known as [imitation](#). The imitation of another's gestures, pronunciation, or utterance.

Pragmatographia: The description of an action or event (such as a battle, a feast, a marriage, a burial, etc.).

Prosopographia, pro-so-po-graph'-i-a: from Gk. *prosopon*, "face" or "person," and *graphein*, "to write." The vivid description of someone's face or character; also, the description of feigned or imaginary characters, such as devils or harpies.

Prosopopoeia, pro-so-po-poe'-i-a, from Gk. *prosopon*, "face," "person" and *poiein*, "to make" A synonym for the figure of speech [personification](#).

Sermocinatio: Speaking dramatically in the first person for someone else (first person dialogue), assigning language that would be appropriate for that person's character (and for one's rhetorical purpose, of course). Sometimes this meant dramatizing an entire scene, performing the dialogue of more than one person. In oratory, sermocinatio was readily blended with the [narratio](#).

Topographia: Description of a place, which might include more than the geographia such as buildings, streets, etc.

Topothesia: The description of an imaginary place.

Appendix B

Variation by Figures of Speech

From Chapter XIII of On Copia of Words and Ideas by Erasmus³

Method of Varying by *Enallage*

The method of enallage occurs when variation is accomplished through a slight alteration in a word, as:

- drinker; drunkard
- fond of drink; I drink
- talkative; talker
- courageous; courage
- fallacious; false
- pleasurable; pleasant

Altering a noun to an adjective or vice versa is enallage:

- according to the expression of Homer; according to the Homeric expression
- a man unusually eloquent; a man of unusual eloquence
- extraordinarily impudent; of extraordinary impudence

Change an active verb to a passive verb or vice versa:

- I am most grateful; the deepest gratitude toward you is felt by me
- A great admiration possesses me; I am possessed by great admiration
- Not thus does a mother love her son; not thus is a son loved by his mother

Convert a verb to a predicate nominative or predicate adjective using the verb “to be” or vice versa. We often refer to this as passive or active voice:

- I doubt not but that *he is able*; I am without doubt that *he possesses ability*
- He strikes quickly; he will strike quickly
- They study; they are studying; they are studious

A noun in place of an infinitive:

- Courage is to be brave in fear; courage is bravery in fear.

In this expression a verb is interchanged with a noun phrase:

- Love your enemy; love him who hates you.

Nouns may be varied by number:

³ Erasmus; Desiderius of Rotterdam; On Copia of Words and Ideas; translated by Donald B. King and H. David Rix; Marquette University Press; 1963; 1999, pages 25-27.

- The Japanese fisherman continues to fish for whales; Japanese fishermen continue to fish for whales.

Erasmus points out, “In general, change of number is more frequent and less harsh in nouns which the grammarians call collective, such as: crowd, people, heard, series; or in those that indicate not some one individual, but a genus or species.”⁴

- A dog grows to maturity in twelve months; or Dogs grow to maturity in twelve months.

⁴ Erasmus; Desiderius of Rotterdam; On Copia of Words and Ideas; translated by Donald B. King and H. David Rix; Marquette University Press; 1963; 1999, page 26.

From Chapter XIV of On Copia of Words and Ideas by Erasmus⁵

Method of Varying by *Antonomasia*

The method of antonomasia occurs with a change of name:

- Jayhawker for a Kansan
- Duck for someone from the University of Oregon
- Grime reaper for death
- American for a U.S. citizen
- Canuck for a Canadian

Or from general to specific:

- The Poet for Homer
- The Philosopher for Aristotle
- The King for Elvis Presley

Or specific to general:

- Croesus for a rich man
- Michael Jordan for a person at the top of his profession
- Longfellow for a poet
- Hitler for a tyrant

⁵ Erasmus; Desiderius of Rotterdam; On Copia of Words and Ideas; translated by Donald B. King and H. David Rix; Marquette University Press; 1963; 1999, page 27.

From Chapter XV of On Copia of Words and Ideas by Erasmus⁶

Method of Varying by *Periphrasis*

The method of antonomasia becomes periphrasis if it occurs with a phrase or a number of words.

Accomplishments:

- the author of Hamlet for Shakespeare
- the Liberator of the Philippines for General MacArthur

Distinctive features:

- for fear: quaking in his boots
- for pride: a swell head; a big head; to big for his britches
- for anger: his eyes flashed, he saw red

By Definition:

- rhetoric: the art of speaking well
- investigate: to search out a matter
- inquire: to ask questions

⁶ Erasmus; Desiderius of Rotterdam; On Copia of Words and Ideas; translated by Donald B. King and H. David Rix; Marquette University Press; 1963; 1999, pages 27-28.

From Chapters XVI and XVII of On Copia of Words and Ideas by Erasmus⁷

Method of Varying by *Metaphor*

Erasmus notes the Latin word for metaphor is *translatio*, which means transference, in that a word is transferred from its true and correct meaning to a new meaning. He lists the following ways that metaphors may be created.

Deflexio transfers a word to a closely related idea. For example, I see, for I understand. Deflexio is the most common type of metaphor.

The next metaphor transfers from an irrational animal to a rational being or vice versa. An example would be to call an offensive man who speaks pointlessly a brayer, bleater, grunter, or barker.

Another metaphor is transferring from an inanimate to an animate idea or vice versa. An example would be a man's stony face or to speak of an unfeeling stone.

Next is transference from animate to animate. Examples would be singing frogs or a horsy laugh.

The final metaphor is from inanimate to inanimate. Examples would be waves of heat or a forest of posts.

He also mentions reciprocal metaphors with the example of saying charioteer for pilot which could justly be reciprocated with pilot for charioteer.

⁷ Erasmus; Desiderius of Rotterdam; On Copia of Words and Ideas; translated by Donald B. King and H. David Rix; Marquette University Press; 1963; 1999, page 28,29.

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