Michael Clay Thompson
Language Arts Curriculum

Secondary Curriculum Guide
This implementation guide applies to the upper tier of the MCT curriculum. This includes Levels 5, 6, and 7, for children in grades 7 and up. The curriculum includes the series *The Magic Lens, The Word Within the Word, Advanced Academic Writing, 4Practice*, and the top three poetry texts.
All MCT language arts texts are based on the belief that children need challenging, classical academics and that academics are inherently exciting.
Language arts is the core of all content.

If we can make students better at language arts, it will help them in every class.
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<th>Grammar</th>
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<th>Poetics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Magic Lens I</td>
<td>The Word Within the Word I</td>
<td>Advanced Academic Writing I</td>
<td>Poetry and Humanity</td>
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What are the principles of a powerful academic program of language arts?

How do the MCT texts fit together?

What is the sequence of instruction?
For teachers, school systems, and homeschool parents who wish to implement an MCT-based program, here are some fundamental principles and strategies.

They can be modified for optimum fit.
Start with Grammar
Academic writing depends upon a prior knowledge of grammar concepts and standards.

Punctuation rules are grammar-intensive.

Four-level grammar must precede the instruction of academic writing.
All MCT texts use the MCT four-level analysis strategy for comprehensive grammar instruction.

“She imagined that the demented boy had wandered away from his friends.”

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<tr>
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<th>v.</th>
<th>pron.</th>
<th>adj.</th>
<th>adj.</th>
<th>n.</th>
<th>v.</th>
<th>v.</th>
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<th>adj.</th>
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subj. AVP ------------------------------- D.O. -------------------------------
subj. -------AVP-------

-----prep. phrase-----

------------------------independent clause------------------------
------------------------dependent clause------------------------
a complex declarative sentence

**Grammar:** Here we see a dependent noun clause used as the direct object of the main clause. Note the past perfect verb *had wandered* in the dependent clause.

**Vocabulary:** The adjective *demented* means insane; *de* means down, and *ment* means mind. W58

**Poetics:** There is a good interplay of consonants between *demented* and *wandered*: *DeMeNdTeD waNDerEd*.

**Writing:** We think of grammar and vocabulary as different areas of language study, but doing these analyses is a sharp reminder that every part of speech is a word, and every word is a part of speech, without exception. Formal language study requires rigorous and connected grammar and vocabulary development. Writing correctly implies using words correctly.
Start with grammar. It is the foundation for punctuation, writing, and vocabulary usage. Use the grammar book in the first quarter, and follow up with application and the practice book throughout the year. Use the language of grammar continuously in discussing vocabulary usage, punctuation, and writing.

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Latin-Based English Vocabulary
The Word Within the Word is a Latin/Greek-based program for learning English vocabulary. It is designed for high challenge.

This vocabulary is a foundation for the advanced words in all subjects.
The Word Within the Word provides a lesson for each week of the year. You can begin The Word Within the Word once students know the parts of speech from The Magic Lens. Begin using the parts of speech to discuss correct word usage.
Continuous Four-Level Practice

4PRACTICE I
GRAMMAR VOCABULARY POETICS WRITING
Michael Clay Thompson
Royal Fireworks Press

4PRACTICE II
GRAMMAR VOCABULARY POETICS WRITING
Michael Clay Thompson
Royal Fireworks Press

4PRACTICE III
GRAMMAR VOCABULARY POETICS WRITING
Michael Clay Thompson
Royal Fireworks Press
The Magic Lens can be powerfully supplemented by the 4Practice text, which provides 100 four-level sentences (three per week for a year) for continuous reinforcement.
Each page gives a four-level analysis problem. The problems are organized into four 25-page sections, each section focusing on one of the four levels of grammar. Study in sequence, or pick and choose.

The practice books also reinforce the vocabulary of the companion vocabulary book.

The practice books are designed to be used flexibly, after *The Magic Lens* is completed.
The four-level analyses in the practice series combine and reinforce the grammar and vocabulary contents.

Each sentence contains words or stems from *The Word Within the Word*.
Sentence 63

From Jane Austen’s *Emma*, 1816

“Your meaning must be **unequivocal**.”

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<tr>
<th>adj.</th>
<th>n.</th>
<th>v.</th>
<th>v.</th>
<th>adj.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>subj.</td>
<td>------LVP------</td>
<td>S.C.</td>
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</table>

--------gerund phrase--------

-------------------------------independent clause-------------------------------

* a simple declarative sentence

**Grammar:** This little sentence has big grammar. First, the subject is a gerund phrase, *your meaning*. Then, the verb consists of the auxiliary verb *must*, which uses as its main verb the bare infinitive *to be*, with the *to* understood. Auxiliary verbs cannot be followed by *to*. The verb is a linking verb and creates an equation between *meaning* and the subject complement *unequivocal*.

**Vocabulary:** To equivocate is to hedge, to speak ambiguously to avoid answering; *equi* means equal, and *voc* means voice. W51

**Poetics:** We see an alliteration in *meaning must*. Notice the assonant *e’s*: *mEaning bE unEquivocal*. Notice the power of the double-stress *must be*—a spondee.

**Writing:** We should pause and examine the stress pattern here. English usually does not put two stressed syllables together. Great writers often double-stress when they want to emphasize an idea, aligning the stresses with the most important words. Stress-awareness is one key component of good writing.
Practice together.

Sentence 63
From Jane Austen’s Emma, 1816

“Your meaning must be unequivocal.”

Grammar: This little sentence has big grammar. First, the subject is a gerund phrase, your meaning. Then, the verb consists of the auxiliary verb must, which uses as its main verb the bare infinitive to be, with the to understood. Auxiliary verbs cannot be followed by to. The verb is a linking verb and creates an equation between meaning and the subject complement unequivocal.

Vocabulary: To equivocate is to hedge, to speak ambiguously to avoid answering; equi means equal, and voc means voice. Wt1

Poetics: We see an alliteration in meaning must. Notice the assonant e’s: mEaning be unEquivocal. Notice the power of the double-stress must be—a spondee.

Writing: We should parse and examine the stress pattern here. English usually does not put two stressed syllables together. Great writers often double-stress when they want to emphasize an idea, aligning the stresses with the most important words. Stress-awareness is a key component of good writing.
Each page in the *4Practice* series contains:

- A sentence with interdisciplinary, historical, researchable content
- A four-level grammar analysis as developed in *The Magic Lens* series
- A Latin-stem vocabulary word from *The Word Within the Word* series
- A description of the poetic devices that are present in the sentence
- An explanation of the elements of good writing in the sentence
Formal, standard, academic writing is the essential genre of writing for all students who intend to advance through challenging high school classes and on to college.

College papers are rarely submitted as journal entries or as short stories.
The formal, academic paper is too complex to master in one pass.

Students must be given layers of opportunity to accumulate mastery.
A combination of quarterly major papers and more frequent one-page MLA point papers, with formal essays on literature tests, provides a continuous program.
Advanced Academic Writing teaches students the elements of standard academic writing, using the MLA research model as the format preference.

Academic writing takes time and practice. Rather than doing one major term paper during the year, students get four—one major formal project per quarter term—giving them a chance to learn this complex skill in increments.
Continuous, Rigorous Literature
One or two classics per year are not sufficient to change students’ reading comprehension.

Low-vocabulary books or dumbed-down books do not create growth in comprehension.

A rigorous program of in-class and outside reading is required. The outside reading should allow for student choice of titles, guided by the teacher.
Students should be reading every month of every year.
The in-class titles are great books that are assigned and that are evaluated with quizzes and essay tests. The students should feel that most of the books are challenging.

Students should read an extensive list of classic works that are the common experience of educated individuals in the world.

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<th>In Class</th>
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The outside classics are designed to double the reading quantity and to give students a reader’s—rather than a student’s—experience. They are therefore best evaluated with amiable conversations—book talks.

We tend to assign everything, but students need choice. The outside classics are chosen by each student with guidance.
In addition to the four major papers assigned in *Advanced Academic Writing*, students can do MLA point papers—one page mini-MLA papers in response to the literature they are reading.
Essay-based literature tests can further expand the students’ experience with formal, standard English.

Students at this point should understand what a standard is and that standards are real.
Serious Poetics
Poetic devices are common in the great prose of many classic novels.

Poetic devices are also an important element of all outstanding writing.

These elements are not learned from prose; they are learned from a serious study of poetry and poetics.

Poetry is an academic training ground for great reading and great writing.
The poetry book can be woven into the assignment matrix as is convenient, with the understanding that student writing will benefit from an alert sense of sound.

Poetry is crucial core content because it is the training ground not only for itself but for advanced prose, and therefore for advanced reading and writing.
Summary

Grammar
Latin-Based Vocabulary
Academic Writing
Rigorous Literature
Poetics