

Royal Fireworks Language Arts by Michael Clay Thompson

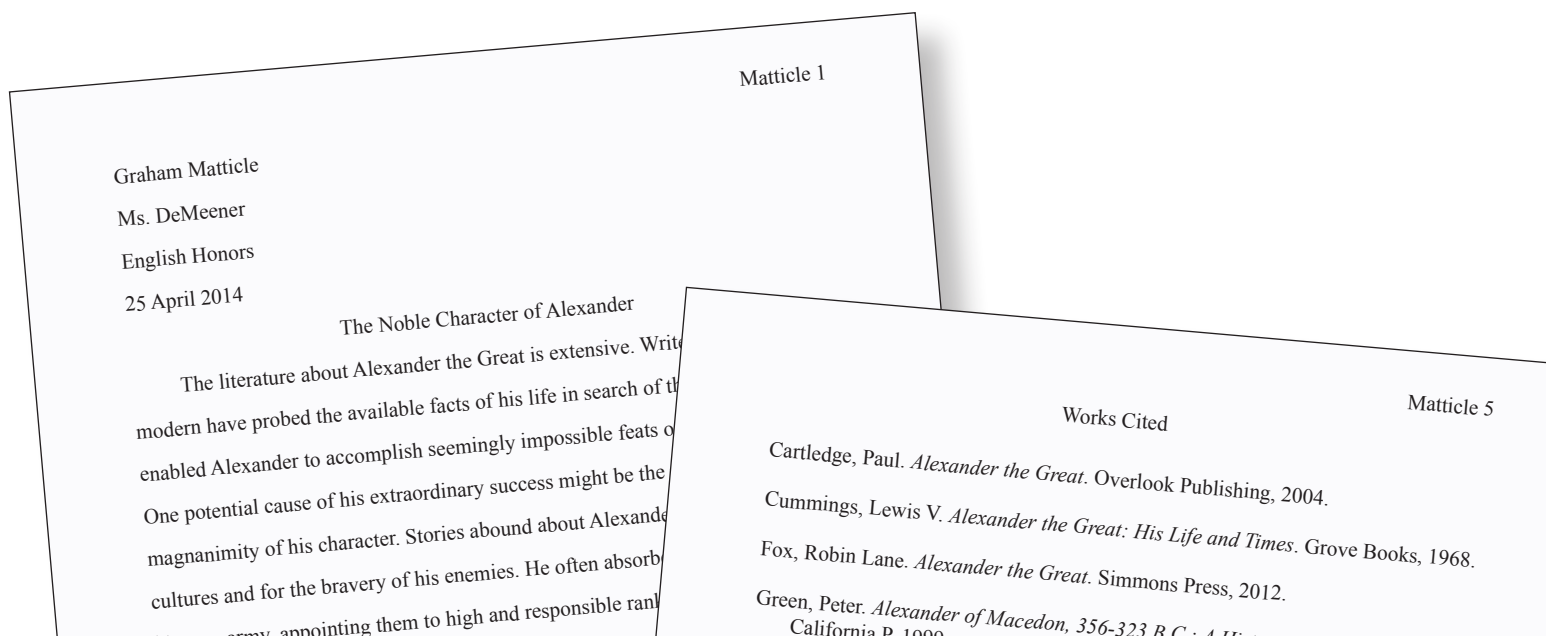
Advanced Academic Writing II

An Illustrated Program

Second Edition

Michael Clay Thompson

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Your Writing

First, let us talk about you. The purpose of this book is not simply to praise writing; it is to make a writer of you. Every word of this book is really about you. The very design of this book is based on what I assume about you, so you need to know what my assumptions about you are.

I think that you want a book that assumes your maturity. You do not want a book that talks down to you. You want a serious, strong book that teaches you advanced things in an advanced way. You are ready for that and prefer it.

I think that you are smart. I think that I can say something one time, in as few words as possible, and you will click into comprehension. You do not want me to waste your time—to say things five ways or to repeat them five times. I think we can go fast. I can present this book in a tight way, trusting your intensity and concentration. I think you would rather concentrate than be distracted.

I think that you do not need constantly to be entertained. You do not need an approach that tries to make academic writing *seem* interesting; it *is* interesting, and you know that without my saying it. You think it is fun to do advanced work. You want to work hard and to be intense about something so important. You do not need me to get you excited about academic writing; you already are.

I think that you want to learn important knowledge permanently. You do not want activities about minor facts that you will forget when the unit ends. You want major knowledge—and work that will make it stick. You want to be educated.

I think that you want challenge and that you know it is more fun to work hard on something good than to be bored with something that is too easy or too trivial.

I think that you want the truth. It might, for example, be relaxing to ignore the fact that many of your future teachers and professors are going to grade your writing severely—but they are, and it is better for you to face it now and get ready than to avoid it now and be caught unprepared. You do not want to realize—too late—that the admonitions you received earlier were true. You want to be prepared.

I think that you will believe me. I think I can tell you that the academic world demands a particular detail (or dozens of them) to be thus, and you will believe me. I think that you will believe me if I tell you that, yes, this is a challenge to learn, and it means hard work, but the more you learn about writing, the more you will love writing—not just casual writing, which is fun too, but excellent academic writing.

I think that you and I will be on the same page.

Two Possible Futures

You have a future as a writer; there is no doubt about that. The question is, what future? Let us assume—and this is a safe assumption—that you will take challenging academic courses in high school and then pursue a college or university degree. For four years most of your college professors will base part (sometimes all) of your semester grades on the papers you write—formal papers, typed on a computer, written in correct academic English, and prepared according to the strict standards of a national format such as the MLA (Modern Language Association) method. You may even take courses in which formal papers are due every week (I had two such courses at the same time in one of my college semesters). You may have semesters at college in which you have papers due in *all* of your courses.

There are two possible futures—good and bad—in which you might find yourself, each one the result of decisions that you make now. The bad future is that you will dread writing assignments, that every time a formal paper is due, you will be filled with anxiety and uncertainty about how to write such a paper. You will not know correct grammar and punctuation. You will feel overwhelmed by the demands of the format (such as the MLA method). You will regard writing papers as the worst part of your college experience. You will hope—in self-delusion—that you will be done with such writing once you are out of college. (You will be in for a shock.)

The good future is that when you receive your formal writing assignments, you will understand the English standards, will appreciate the clarity and simplicity of the format (often MLA), and will be glad that you can type your papers the way the professor expects them. You will have enough confidence about your standard English that you can enjoy the knowledge and ideas of the topic and experience research as a deep learning opportunity. You will be grateful that you have written so many academic papers because the experience has prepared you for major careers for which you otherwise would not have been qualified.

The purpose of *Advanced Academic Writing, Volume II*, is to prepare you for the second future so that you can enjoy academic writing and thrive in the academic environment. This book is the second in a series of three that will prepare you for writing the advanced academic papers you will have to submit in honors high school and college courses. Volume II incorporates but goes beyond the introductory instruction of Volume I. This means that in the assignments of this book, you will be expected to exhibit—and will be held responsible for—the four elements of English, essay form, MLA format, and intellectual content that were introduced in Volume I.

Volume I is basic; it explains the standards of academic writing, the elements of essay structure, and the first principles of an MLA research paper. It introduces ten standard proofreaders' marks used by teachers, professors, and editors, and it reviews the rules of punctuation, usage, and grammar that must be followed in a formal paper. Volume I presents forty actual research paper comments that I have made on student papers during a period of decades; these comments emphasize common errors that students are likely to make. To all of this knowledge, we must now add new details and new elements.

In Volume II you will extend your competence on every front. To maintain what you have learned in Volume I, you will find all of the elements you already studied, but now you will encounter a new array of requirements. You will have more elaborate MLA format rules to follow, more competent essay continuity to forge, more proofreaders' marks to decipher, and forty more actual research paper comments to absorb.

I hope that you studied Volume I and are ready to build on that foundation. If not, then you will need to do some extra studying—there is nothing wrong with that—to get in sync with this book. I do not want you to have to juggle two books back and forth, so I am including, once again, Volume I's summaries of the punctuation, usage, and grammar rules expected in a formal paper, as well as the forty actual research paper comments from Volume I—all of those reappear in this book so that you can review them easily.

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Ishun 1

Ms. Ereecord

English II

14 May 2014

The Structure of *Romeo and Juliet*'s Prologue

Because the meaning of the words so captures our attention, it is easy to read the prologue to William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* about "Two households, both alike in dignity, / In fair Verona, where we lay our scene" (1-2) without realizing that the prologue is an English sonnet: a fourteen line poem, in iambic pentameter, containing three quatrains and a couplet.

The sonnet's first quatrain is a single sentence that presents the families, the scene of Verona, and the blood feud that makes "civil hands unclean" (4), but the second quatrain—which is also a single sentence—introduces the "star-crossed lovers" who are the main figures of the play:

From forth the fatal loins of

Logic and Evidence

“No one’s say-so is evidence.” – Carl Sagan

In a democracy each citizen has an equal right to express an opinion, but this does not mean that all opinions are equally true. Opinions can be wrong, false, even ridiculous—especially if the facts are wrong or the reasoning is bogus. In advanced academic writing, we construct a case that our thesis is not a mere personal opinion; it is the truth. This puts special burdens on us, as writers, to get our facts right and reasons straight.

At its heart your paper is about an idea: the thesis. If we consider the four steps of core element grading, we see that the purpose of the first three elements—correct English, format, and essay structure—is to deliver the fourth element: your idea. The whole purpose of an academic paper is to use these elements to communicate your idea.

For your paper to be intellectually meaningful, you must accomplish two things. First, your **thesis must have merit**; it must contribute an insight or perception that is not obvious and that everyone else does not already know. You must have something to show. You develop your idea in the research process. Read, read, read. That is why it is called *re-search*. Be patient when you research; Linus Pauling, the winner of two Nobel Prizes, once said that “the best way to have a good idea is to have a lot of ideas,” so the more possible ideas you find, the more likely you are to find a good one.

Second, **your case for the thesis must be valid**. Being convincing is not enough because even specious (wrong) arguments can seem convincing. You must take the trouble to be right, and then you must construct a sharp, logical case that presents your evidence.

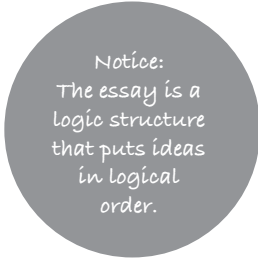
You may have a good thesis, but if your argument does not make sense, if your reasoning is wrong, if your statements are illogical, if your quotations are not relevant or effective, then you have not proved your thesis.

Now we begin to understand why essays have the parts they have: the structure of an essay is a logic-strategy. An essay is like a proof in geometry. The introduction presents the thesis to be proved, the body develops evidence and facts that prove it, and the conclusion extracts the essence of the body and gathers it to a perfect point.

Educated people like clear truth and careful thought. They appreciate good ideas presented with care, with integrity, in a logical sequence, and with precise words—or in the case of mathematics, words and numbers. Educated minds like it when facts are discussed responsibly; they are uncomfortable with exaggeration, hyperbole, careless words, unfounded claims, loud voices, unsupported arguments. They take the word *know* seriously and do not say they *know* something that is only a guess or a preference.

We see this respect for truth and organization in many forms of knowledge and art. An English sonnet, for example, is a highly structured fourteen-line poem consisting of three quatrains and a couplet, with the logic being: **If** quatrain A, **and** quatrain B, **and** quatrain C, **then** couplet. Sonnets combine poetry and logic perfectly. Here is Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 73”:

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
 When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
 Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
 Bare ruin’d choirs where late the sweet birds sang.
 In me thou seest the twilight of such day
 As after sunset fadeth in the west,
 Which by and by black night doth take away,
 Death’s second self that seals up all in rest.
 In me thou see’st the glowing of such fire
 That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
 As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
 Consumed with that which it was nourish’d by.
 This thou perceivest, which makes thy love more strong,
 To love that well which thou must leave ere long.



Notice:
 The essay is a
 logic structure
 that puts ideas
 in logical
 order.

Shakespeare’s sonnet uses crystal structure to express the approaching end of the speaker’s life. In the first quatrain the speaker compares himself to branches that have lost their leaves. In the second quatrain he compares himself to the dim light just after the sun has set. In the third quatrain he compares himself to the glowing embers of a fire that has lost its flame. These three comparisons lead to the emotional conclusion of the couplet. An essay is like that; it uses form to make thought clear.

Advanced Writing Assignments

This section of the book contains four writing assignments, each more complex and challenging than the former. Each assignment begins with a reflection on vocabulary and grammar. This is followed by a special focus section of ten actual research paper comments emphasizing details of real student papers. Additional components may follow. The specifications of the writing assignments are presented at the end of each section.

FIRST PAPER: A PAPER ABOUT POETRY OR SHAKESPEARE

Powemm 1

Rita Powemm
 Ms. Tagogue
 English Honors
 5 February 2015

Your thesis is not visible enough either in your introduction or in the vague title of the paper. The reader is uncertain what the paper is about. The title is too general, and you take too long to get to the point.

President Lincoln's Ballads

Abraham Lincoln loved poetry. In 1844, as he was campaigning for Henry Clay, the thirty-five-year-old Abraham Lincoln returned to Indiana, the state where he had grown up. Lincoln had not returned to Indiana for fifteen years, but the scenes of his childhood and the sight of his mother's and sister's graves filled Lincoln with poignant feelings about his life. He sat down and wrote three poems, which Randall Jarret has described as "no *magnum opus*, but very good ballad stanzas" (Jarret 217).

Recalling his past, the first poem, "My Childhood's Home," contains ten ballad stanzas, with the first announcing the theme of sad memories:

You handle quotations well.

My childhood's home I see again,
 And sadden with the view;
 And still, as memory crowds my brain,
 There's pleasure in it too. (1-4)

The memories sadden, even as they contain pleasure, but we learn more about this pleasure later in the poem. In the fifth stanza Lincoln explains that "memory will hallow all / We've known, but know no more" (5-6). Nineteen years later, Lincoln used the word *hallow* in his *Gettysburg Address*, but there he felt that his memory had hallowed those things now lost in the past. In *The Literary Path to Gettysburg*, Scott Ridley explains clearly that:

This is an excellent quote. Is this the right place for it?

Lincoln was a neophyte, but he had a firm grasp of poetic technique, which is evidenced in almost all of his prose. In "My Childhood's Home" Lincoln emphasized the word *hallow* by enclosing it in words that echoed the *l*'s: "will hallow all." We see the same technique in his emphasis on soft consonants *n* and *m* in the following line. (Ridley 74)

Ridley shows that Lincoln reserved the word *hallow* for occasions of maximum importance, such as the consecration of the Gettysburg battlefield, an event at which he

Assignment One • Writing about Poetry

Would you be surprised if I told you that papers about poetry are among the most important you will ever write? Perhaps you would, but it is true. You likely will have to write many academic papers about poetry, and that is a good thing. It is easy to misunderstand and underestimate both the nature and the intellectual importance of poetry. Not only are great poems among the most famous and profound works of art in Western civilization, but the study of poetry has been the training ground for great prose writers, not just for poets. Most great novelists also wrote poems and used those poetry techniques in the prose sentences of their novels; if we miss the poetics of their prose, we are missing something important. If you want to study formal poetics, my poetry text that accompanies this book is *Poetry, Plato, and the Concept of Beauty*.

Because poems are often less than one page in length, and because they are set up differently on the page than ordinary paragraphs are, questions arise about how to discuss, quote, and document poems. Let us look at some of the standards.

Titles in quotation marks: Titles of short poems are in quotation marks, not italics.

Line numbers, not page numbers: In citing poems we do not put page numbers in the parenthetical documentation; instead, we give line numbers.

Quoting four lines or more: If you quote four lines or more of a poem, you must block indent the passage half an inch. If the poem has creative spacing as part of its appearance, try to reproduce the spacing of the original poem. If you omit an entire line or more from the middle of the quotation, put a line of periods followed by single spaces about the length of the average line of the poem (.) to indicate the missing lines.

Quoting three lines or fewer: If you quote three lines or fewer from a poem, then you do not need to format it as a block quotation; you can include it in your text. Enclose the quotation in quotation marks, and use slashes with spaces on each side to indicate line endings. Use a double-slash (//) to indicate a stanza break.

Study these techniques on the following page.

Assignment One • Proofreading Practice

Let us return to the problem of proofreading. Of all the steps involved in writing a formal academic paper, the most difficult to grasp may be proofreading. There is a proclivity to relax in relief once you finish your first draft and to assume that all is well. There is a tendency for new writers to underestimate the fiendish way errors have of hiding, particularly from their authors. We imagine, when we first write academic papers, that proofreading is a sort of quick scan; it will only take a few minutes.

Wrong. Many a student has failed a major paper because he or she had a beginner's idea about what proofreading is.

Proofreading is not a quick, concluding activity. It takes time and commitment, first, because you as the writer will be partially blind to your own errors. In writer's blindness, you know what you mean, and you tend to see what you mean, rather than what you have actually typed. As the writer you can look straight at an error and not notice it. Part of becoming an excellent proofreader is rerouting your brain so that your errors become visible—so that you can look coldly at the words on the paper. Proofreading your own words is harder than proofreading someone else's.

Second, proofreading is a multi-level, complex problem. You have to proofread the grammar of every sentence. You have to proofread the punctuation of every sentence. You have to proofread the style and the choice of words. You have to proofread the essay structure and make sure that all of the paragraphs are in the correct sequence with connecting language that bridges from one paragraph to the next. You have to proofread your logic, the relevance of your quotations, the sufficiency of your proof. You have to proofread every detail of your MLA format.

This takes time, and it takes more than one pass. Proofreading a formal paper is not a ten-minute sweep. It may take four long sessions. The best students become ultra-intense about proofreading. They get those fierce, academic eyes.

Can you find fifteen errors on the opposite page? A caution: All hyphens in the long quote are correct.

1
2 Eppie Grahame
3 Ms. Kreeant
4 English Honors
5 17 October 2013

The False Gloom of A.E. Housman

6
7 In 1896 when Alfred Edward Housman was only thirty-seven years old he wrote “The
8 Time You Won Your Town the Race,” a poem that helped to establish his reputation as a poetic
9 genius capable of expressing a dark spirit of resignation about Life’s inexorable tragedies.
10 The poem, together with other Housman poems that express the same fatalistic theme, can be
11 viewed in part through isolation and emptiness in Housman’s life, but there are reasons to think
12 that the shadows in his famous poems do not fully represent his view of life, which may have
13 been more sedate.

14 “The Time You Won Your Town the Race”, set at the graveside of a young athlete who
15 has died, contain seven quatrains of iambic tetrameter with an *aabb* end rhyme scheme. It takes
16 Housman only two quatrains to create both a vision of the event and a spirit of melancholy:

17 The time you won your town the race
18 We chaired you through the market-place;
19 Man and boy stood cheering by,
20 And home we brought you shoulder-high.
21 To-day, the road all runners come,
22 Shoulder-high we bring you home,
23 and set you at your threshold down,
24 Townsman of a stiller town. (1-8)

25 The two quatrains depict different times, with the first depicting the joyful day of athletic
26 victory in the past and the second depicting the sad present—the day of the young athletes’
27 burial. The two images are unified by the crowd, which in each case but for opposite reasons is
28 bearing the boy “shoulder-high.” Once “cheering” the young athlete, Housman shows the crowd
29 as “stiller” now. The road of the race has evolved into the metaphorical road and Housman takes
30 us to a higher level.

Works Cited

- 31
32
33 Adams, Mark, and Jonas Hermanos. *British Poetry before the Turn of the Century*.
34 Paladin Press, 2009.
35 Black, Sol M. Introduction. *The Subtle Poetry of A.E. Housman*, by C. D. Rohm, U of
36 Coleridge P, 2005, pp. 1-21.

Assignment One • A Paper about Poetry or Shakespeare

The Concept of the Paper

In high school and college, you almost certainly will have to write papers about poets and poetry. You may also need to include poems in papers about other subjects. Now is the time to learn how to do that. You need experience with documenting poetry quotations properly, but more than that, you need to learn as much as you can about the importance of poetry in intellectual history. To deepen the exploration, we will require you to read biographies or other nonfiction about the poet you select.

Purpose: Thinking and Writing about Poetry

This paper will develop your ability to interpret poetic ideas using a combination of factual information and critical interpretation.

Topic: An Idea in Poetry Written before 1950

This is a scholarly paper, so the poetry you discuss may not be from a modern poem or song. Your instructor may also want to tie the topic to the course content, so if you are studying England, it may have to be a British poet. Shakespeare is one serious possibility.

As an example, suppose you decide to work on the poetry of a British poet. You might discover, as you read the poems carefully, that there is a consistent theme of optimism, or despair, or loyalty, or emptiness that pervades the poems, tying them together. You could explore that and perhaps find facts about the poet's life, or comments in the poet's letters, that help to explain the theme.

Length: Four Pages

This paper must be no more than four pages long, with a fifth page for the Works Cited. Page four should contain a half-page or more of text. This only amounts to about ten paragraphs and four long quotations, so it is not as big an assignment as it might seem.

Due Date: Provided by Instructor

Your instructor will assign the date, providing at least two weeks for both research and writing. Late papers will lose one letter grade per day.

Format: MLA

This will be an MLA essay with long and short quotations. A paper done in any other format will be returned to you to be redone. The instructor may assign a letter-grade-per-day penalty for lateness in such a case. The paper should be printed on one side of the page only in a legible 12-point font that is double-spaced and has a ragged right margin. There must be a minimum of two long quotations and four short quotations in the paper. There is no separate title page. Do not hole-punch your paper or put it in a plastic or cardboard folder; keep it professional-looking.

Structure: Essay

This paper should be a three-part thesis essay, with an introduction, body, and conclusion. The paragraphs should be organized and clearly connected. Use a key word from your thesis to connect the paper.

Sources: Five Sources

For this paper you must have a minimum of five sources in your Works Cited page, including both books of poetry and supporting nonfiction books such as critical comment and biography.

Honor: Your Plagiarism Pledge

Before you turn your paper in, you should write on the back of the paper, "I know that plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's words or ideas, and I pledge that this paper is not plagiarized," and sign it. A plagiarized paper will receive a zero.

Instructor: Your Instructor Is the Authority

For all of these guidelines, your instructor has the final say. If he or she wants to amend any detail, that is final.

Mollie Fide

Ms. Cheevius

English Honors

9 October 2014

The Dissident Poetry of Jane Austen

Readers of Jane Austen's novels have always enjoyed her dissident observations about society's fatuous customs. In *Pride and Prejudice*, for example, the *fortissimo* Mrs. Bennet is obsessed with marrying her daughters to wealthy men, and Mr. Bennet provides constant retorts, at one point saying to his daughter Elizabeth, who had rejected a proposal of marriage from the tedious Mr. Collins, that "An unhappy alternative is before you, Elizabeth. From this day you must be a stranger to one of your parents. Your mother will never see you again if you do not merry Mr. Collins, and I will never see you again if you do" (Austen 192). In Mr. Bennet's words, before his nonplussed wife, we detect the dissident spirit of the author, concealing more than a common disdain for the social rules that would force marriage for financial reasons.

In addition to her famous novels, however, Jane Austen wrote accomplished poetry that echoed her social concerns. One such poem, "When stretch'd on One's Bed," expresses Austen's utter weariness with the tedium of social events. The poem has five sestet, with the spanish-style rhyme scheme of *aabccb*, and the second stanza brings the tedium of society to sharp focus: "How little one feels / For the waltzes and reels / Of our dance-loving friends at a Ball!" (7-12). The second sestet strengthens the dissident sense of indifference to society's shallow concerns:

How little one minds
 If a company dines
 On the Best that the Season affords!
 How short is one's muse
 O'er the Sauces and Stews,

Peasars of Lords. (13-18)

Works Cited

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- . "When Stretch'd on One's Bed." *Great Poems by Great Novelists*, edited by Marcus Heavilly, Schusterbach, 2001, p. 87.
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- Upp, Mark M. "Poetic Elements in Classic Prose."