

USING THE BIBLE FOR TEACHING WRITING

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As a piece of literature, the Bible presents countless examples for teaching the techniques of good writing. The following illustrations are just a beginning.

1. **Good writing contains strong nouns and verbs.** Many writers over-use simple verbs such as *can, am, is*, etc. The Psalms provide an excellent source of well-chosen, concrete, powerful nouns and verbs which conjure up strong images. Psalm 23 is a perfect example.

READ the Psalm aloud, using the following parts:

Narrator: Regular type

Group 1: Nouns (*italics*)

Group 2: Verbs (**bold**)

The *Lord* is my *shepherd*; I shall not **want**.
He **makes** me to **lie** down in green *pastures*;
He **leads** me beside the still *waters*.
He **restores** my *soul*;
He **leads** me in the *paths* of *righteousness*
For his name's *sake*.
Yea, though I **walk** through the *valley* of the *shadow* of *death*,
I will **fear** no *evil*;
For You are with me;
Your *rod* and Your *staff*, they **comfort** me.
You **prepare** a *table* before me in the *presence* of my *enemies*;
You **anoint** my *head* with *oil*;
My *cup* **runs** over.
Surely *goodness* and *mercy* shall **follow** me
All the *days* of my *life*;
And I will **dwell** in the *house* of the *Lord*
Forever.

MODEL the Psalm. Write a modern version by replacing the images with modern references.

2. **Good writers use literary and poetic devices.** Both the Old and New Testament provide numerous instances. Students can do a “Bible hunt” to find their own examples.

Hyperbole: An exaggeration for effect.

“My iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to look up; **They are more than the hairs of my head.**” Psalm 40:12.

MODEL Psalm 40:12. Use hyperbole. Write a passage that describes how you feel when you are experiencing joy in nature.

Metaphor: A comparison between two objects, without using *like* or *as*.

“He also brought me up out of a **horrible pit, out of the miry clay.**” Psalm 40:2. (The Psalmist is comparing his own despair with an actual pit.)

Jude 12 and 13 contains a series of powerful metaphors to describe enemies of Christ.

MODEL Jude verses 12 and 13. Create a series of matching metaphors to describe the opposite class of people—those who are compassionate, loving followers of Jesus.

Deniers of Jesus (Jude 12 and 13)	Followers of Jesus
Clouds without water, Carried about by the winds	
Late autumn trees without fruit, Twice dead, pulled up by the roots	
Raging waves of the sea, Foaming up their own shame	

Simile: A comparison between two objects, using *like* or *as*.

“Though your sins be **like scarlet**, they shall be **as white as snow.**” Isaiah 1:18.

“Before the throne there was a sea of glass, **like crystal.**” Rev. 4:6.

MODEL Revelation. Describe another aspect of heaven using a simile.

Repetition: “Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. Let Israel now say, ‘His mercy endures forever.’ Let the house of Aaron now say, ‘His mercy endures forever’...” (Psalm 118)

MODEL the passages. Write your own poetry, using repetition for emphasis.

Symbolism: Using one thing to represent another.

“Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.” (Jesus is referring to his own body). John 2:19

CREATE A SYMBOL. Choose a word or phrase that might be used to represent something deeper. Write a paragraph using your symbol.

Allusion: A reference to another time, place, work, person, etc.

“For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother...’” Mark 7:10

FIND AN ALLUSION. Look in a book you are reading. Find a passage where a character **alludes** to something else.

Imagery: Words that form powerful mental pictures.

“He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightning for the rain; He brings the wind out of his treasuries.” Psalm 135:7.

MODEL THE PSALM. Write a paragraph filled with powerful mental pictures of the majesty of God.

3. Good writing may be in different genres.

Narrative

A story with dialogue, characters, plot, setting and conflict resolution.

The Book of Job

MODEL. Write a developed narrative. Include dialogue, characters, plot, setting.

Persuasive essay

A piece of expository writing intended to convince someone of something.

Peter’s sermon on repentance in Acts 3

MODEL. Create a compelling article, convincing an audience of your point of view.

Poetry

A rich, concise form of writing with strong imagery and flow
The Psalms

MODEL. Write your own Psalm, following the style of one of your favorites.

Letters

Personal pieces of writing sent from one person to another.
I, II, III John

MODEL. Write a letter to encourage a friend to stay close to Jesus. Choose one of John's letters as a model.

4. Good writing makes use of different organizational structures.

Comparison/Contrast

Continually used by Paul to emphasize his points.

“For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.” Romans 7:15.

MODEL PAUL'S STYLE. Write a series of sentences demonstrating contrasting thoughts and ideas.

Cause/Effect

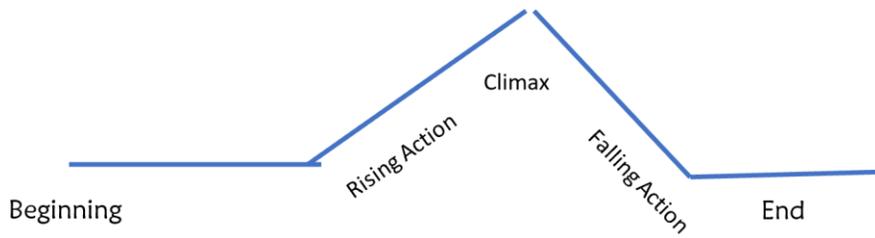
A series of events leads to a chain reaction.
The story of Jonah.

BRING IN SCIENCE. Write a paragraph about a phenomenon in nature that illustrates cause and effect.

Problem/Solution

Something happens that needs to be fixed. This causes you to want to keep reading. There are many examples throughout the Bible. The ultimate is the story of redemption.

WRITE A SHORT STORY about a character encountering a problem. Use the plot diagram below, ending with the falling action and wrap-up.



Chronological

Events progress in a time sequence.

The story of Joseph

STUDY AND MODEL. Create a list of the scenes in the story of Joseph. Write your own chronological story, referring to the story of Joseph as you add transitions and move the plot forward.