

Gradus ad Montem • Year 1 (Grade 9)

The Progymnasmata • Student Workbook • Units 1–4

This volume joins the four Year 1 Student Workbooks in one place, for reading straight through or printing. The unit files remain the masters: make changes there, then reassemble this volume. The answer keys, unit quizzes and sample compositions are in the companion Teacher Guide volume.

Assembled October 29, 2026.

Contents

- Unit 1: Fable (Weeks 1–6)
- Unit 2: Narrative (Weeks 7–15)
- Unit 3: Chreia (Weeks 19–26)
- Unit 4: Maxim (Weeks 27–34)

Weeks 16–18 and 35–36 (portfolio revision, declamation and exams) have their own pair of books: the Review, Declamation and Exams Student Workbook and its Teacher Guide. The front matter for printed and PDF editions is in Curriculum/Front Matter.md.

Gradus ad Montem • Unit 1: Fable

Student Workbook • Weeks 1–6

This unit teaches the first exercise of the ancient Greek and Roman schools: the fable. Ancient students began here, and so do you. Over six weeks you will restate a fable, expand one, compress one, retell one from the middle, join one to a true story, and finally invent your own.

Every later exercise in the four years reuses these moves. Learn them well.

Page references such as (Kennedy, p. 96) point to George A. Kennedy's translation of the ancient handbooks, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (Society of Biblical Literature, 2003). This workbook gives the handbooks' teachings in its own words.

Before you begin

Your three notebooks

Set these up in Week 1 and keep them all four years.

Notebook	What goes in it
Commonplace book	Copywork, definitions, memorable passages, and a running collection of fables, sayings and morals. Write neatly; you will reread it for years.
Composition binder	Outlines, drafts and final copies, in order, with the checklist for each. It becomes your portfolio.
Grammar notebook	Definitions, exercises, sentence diagrams and inflection drills.

Keeping your commonplace book

A commonplace book is a notebook in which you keep, in your own hand, the passages worth keeping. Theon told students to collect the finest passages they read, recite them, and call them to mind often (Kennedy, p. 69); the schoolmasters of the Renaissance required one of every student. Yours has a further job: in the Week 36 final exam, it is the one aid you may use. You will have ten minutes to find an example and a testimony in it. A passage you cannot find again is a passage you do not have, and everything below serves finding.

Number your pages before you write anything. Leave the last six pages blank; they are your index.

How to enter a passage. Five parts, two minutes:

1. **A heading** at the top of the entry: one or two words naming what the passage is about — *Work, Pride, Hospitality*. Choose the word you would look under three months from now.

2. **The passage itself**, copied exactly, in quotation marks.
3. **The source, always**: author, work, and place — *Hesiod, Works and Days* 289. In an elaboration, a testimony without its source is no testimony at all.
4. **A margin code**, so your eye can sort a page at a glance: **M** a maxim · **E** an example (a real person's deed) · **T** a testimony (an authority's words) · **V** a line of verse · **F** a fault of my own to watch.
5. **One line of your own**: why you kept it, or where it might serve ("cause for a chreia on labor").

The index. Each time you make an entry, turn to the index and write its heading word and page number under the heading's first letter: *P* — *Pride*, 23. Ten seconds. This is what makes Week 36 possible.

What goes in, week by week: the line you scan each week (Unit 2 onward); the maxims each unit tells you to copy; any passage from your reading you want to keep — Theon's instruction, and the heart of the book; after each exam, the one fault you most need to watch, marked F.

What a good page looks like

page 23

M · Work

"Between us and Goodness the gods have placed the sweat of our brows."

— *Hesiod, Works and Days* 289 (*Evelyn-White*)

Could serve as a testimony for any chreia or maxim on labor.

E · Pride

Croesus showed Solon his treasures and asked to be named the happiest of men. Solon refused; Croesus ended on a pyre, crying Solon's name.

— *Herodotus, Book 1* (*Week 5 model*)

An example for pride, riches, or "call no man happy before the end."

V · Keats, line 9, scanned: five iambs, regular.

F · My morals say more than my stories show. (Teacher's mark, Week 3 fable.)

And in the index, under *P*: — *Pride*, 23; under *W*: — *Work*, 23.

Notice what makes these entries work: every one has a heading you could think of by yourself, a source that can be named aloud, and a line that already knows where the passage will serve. The page is not beautiful; it is findable.

How each week works

Day	What you do	About how long
Day 1	Lesson with your teacher (at co-op, or at home with your parent). Recite memory work, hear the model, narrate it back, learn the form, analyze the model, learn the grammar concept, discuss the reading.	75–90 minutes
Day 2	Copywork, style exercise, grammar exercise, outline.	45 minutes
Day 3	Write the composition.	45 minutes
Day 4	Revise with the checklist, take dictation, write the final copy, read it aloud, work on memory.	45 minutes
Every day	Read the week's assigned reading.	30 minutes

How to say the names

These are the usual English pronunciations — what you will hear from teachers and audiobooks. The Greeks said them differently; consistency is the courtesy. Capitals mark the stress.

Word	Say it
Gradus ad Montem (the course's name: "Steps to the Mount")	GRAH-dus ad MON-tem
progymnasmata	proh-gim-NAHS-mah-tah
Theon	THEE-on
Hermogenes	her-MOJ-uh-neeZ
Aphthonius	af-THOH-nee-us
Nicolaus	nik-oh-LAY-us
Aesop	EE-sop
chreia (plural chreias)	KRAY-uh, KRAY-uhz
promythion	proh-MITH-ee-on
epimythion	ep-ih-MITH-ee-on
gnome (the Greek word for maxim)	NOH-may
Isocrates	eye-SOCK-ruh-teeZ
Diogenes	dy-OJ-uh-neeZ
Theognis	thee-OG-niss
Keats	KEETS — one syllable, rhymes with <i>beets</i>

Memory work for the unit

By Week 6 you will recite the fable below word for word, and the three definitions after it.

The Ants and the Grasshopper (Aesop, trans. George Fyler Townsend)

The Ants were spending a fine winter's day drying grain collected in the summertime. A Grasshopper, perishing with famine, passed by and earnestly begged for a little food. The Ants inquired of him, "Why did you not treasure up food during the summer?" He replied, "I had not leisure enough. I passed the days in singing." They then said in derision: "If you were foolish enough to sing all the summer, you must dance supperless to bed in the winter."

Term	Definition to memorize
Fable	A fable is a made-up story that gives a picture of a truth. (Adapted from Aphthonius; Kennedy, p. 96.)
Promythion	The moral of a fable, stated before the story.
Epimythion	The moral of a fable, stated after the story.

Week	Memory work
1	Learn the definition of a fable.
2	Recite the definition of a fable. Learn promythion and epimythion.
3	Recite all three definitions. Learn the first two sentences of the fable.
4	Recite sentences 1–2. Learn the Ants' question and the Grasshopper's answer.
5	Recite through the Grasshopper's answer. Learn the last sentence.
6	Recite the whole fable and all three definitions.

The fable checklist

Use this every Day 4. It is also on the last page.

- **One clear action.** The story has a beginning, a middle and an end, and nothing wanders.
- **True to nature.** Each character acts and speaks the way that creature (or person) would.
- **A moral that fits.** The moral says what the story shows, not something else.
- **Plain style.** Short, clear sentences, close to ordinary speech.
- **Correct English.** Spelling, punctuation and grammar are clean.
- **Read aloud.** I read the final copy aloud and fixed anything that sounded wrong.

Week 1 • Restating a Fable

This week you will: learn what a fable is, retell one in your own words, and write its moral two ways.

Reading this week (30 minutes a day)

- Aesop: "The Ants and the Grasshopper," "The Hare and the Tortoise," "The Lion and the Mouse," "The North Wind and the Sun," "The Fox and the Grapes"
- Bulfinch, *The Age of Fable*, Chapter I (the gods), or the matching chapter in Hamilton's *Mythology*
- Hesiod, *Theogony*, lines 116–210 (the beginning of the world)

Model text

The Ants and the Grasshopper (Aesop, trans. George Fyler Townsend)

The Ants were spending a fine winter's day drying grain collected in the summertime. A Grasshopper, perishing with famine, passed by and earnestly begged for a little food. The Ants inquired of him, "Why did you not treasure up food during the summer?" He replied, "I had not leisure enough. I passed the days in singing." They then said in derision: "If you were foolish enough to sing all the summer, you must dance supperless to bed in the winter."

Day 1 • Lesson with your teacher

1. Narrate. After you hear the fable read aloud twice, tell it back from memory in your own words.

2. Copy the definition into the front of your commonplace book:

Fable: A fable is a made-up story that gives a picture of a truth. (Adapted from Aphthonius; Kennedy, p. 96.)

3. The three kinds of fable (Aphthonius; Kennedy, p. 96). Copy this table into your commonplace book.

Kind	Who acts	Example
Rational	People	A man who builds his house on sand
Ethical	Animals with human character	The ants and the grasshopper
Mixed	People and animals together	A shepherd and a wolf

4. Analyze the model. Answer aloud with your teacher.

1. Who are the characters? What does each one want?
2. What happens at the beginning, in the middle and at the end?

3. Which of the three kinds of fable is this?
 4. What truth does the fable picture? Say it in one sentence.
 5. Does Townsend state the moral separately? If not, where in the fable does the moral live?
5. **Grammar: the parts of speech, and subject and predicate.** Copy into your grammar notebook:

Part of speech	What it does	Examples
Noun	Names a person, place, thing or idea	ants, grain, winter
Pronoun	Stands in for a noun	him, he, they
Verb	Shows action or being	begged, replied, were
Adjective	Describes a noun or pronoun (articles <i>a, an, the</i> are adjectives)	fine, foolish
Adverb	Describes a verb, adjective or adverb: how, when, where, how much	earnestly, then
Preposition	Shows how a noun relates to another word	in, during, to
Conjunction	Joins words or groups of words	and, if
Interjection	Shows sudden feeling	oh, alas

*Every sentence has a **subject** (whom or what the sentence is about) and a **predicate** (what is said about the subject). The **simple subject** is the main noun or pronoun; the **simple predicate** is the verb.*

Day 2 • Copywork, style, grammar, outline

Copywork. Copy the Ants' final speech exactly, with every capital and comma, into your commonplace book:

They then said in derision: "If you were foolish enough to sing all the summer, you must dance supperless to bed in the winter."

Style and copia: synonyms. *Copia* means abundance: having many ways to say a thing. For each word below, list at least four synonyms. Use a dictionary or thesaurus if you need one.

1. grain
2. perishing
3. begged
4. derision
5. foolish

Then rewrite this sentence three different ways, using your synonyms:

A Grasshopper, perishing with famine, passed by and earnestly begged for a little food.

Grammar exercise A: parts of speech. Label every word.

1. The ants worked hard.
2. A hungry grasshopper came to their door.
3. He sang and danced in the summer.
4. Alas, the winter was long!
5. The wise ants answered him sharply.

Grammar exercise B: subject and predicate. Draw a vertical line between the complete subject and the complete predicate.

1. The ants were drying grain.
2. A hungry grasshopper passed by.
3. The foolish singer begged for food.
4. Winter came quickly.
5. The ants in the field laughed at him.
6. His summer songs could not feed him.
7. Every ant had worked all summer.
8. The cold north wind blew across the field.

Grammar exercise C: your first diagrams. A sentence diagram starts with a **base line**. The simple subject goes on the left, the verb on the right, with a vertical line between them that crosses the base line.

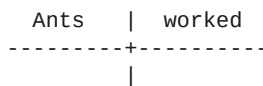


Diagram the simple subject and verb of each sentence. Leave out every other word for now.

1. Ants worked.
2. The grasshopper sang.
3. Winter came.
4. The hungry grasshopper begged.

Outline. Write a three-part outline of the fable with only two or three key words per line.

Part	Key words
Beginning	
Middle	
End	

Day 3 • Composition

Assignment: restate the fable, then give it a moral two ways.

1. **Restate it.** Close the workbook. Using only your outline, write the fable in your own words, 120–180 words. Keep the story; change the words.
2. **Version A, with a promythion.** Copy your restatement and put a one-sentence moral *before* the story.
3. **Version B, with an epimythion.** Copy it again and put a one-sentence moral *after* the story. Word this moral differently from Version A.

Label the two versions A and B in your composition binder.

Day 4 • Revise, dictation, final copy

1. **Revise** both versions with the fable checklist.
 2. **Dictation.** Your teacher or parent will read a passage from the model. Write it exactly, then check it against the text.
 3. **Final copy.** Write the better of your two versions neatly in your binder, with the checklist attached.
 4. **Read it aloud** at home. You will recite or read it at the start of next week's lesson.
 5. **Memory:** learn the definition of a fable.
 6. **Reflect** (two or three sentences in your commonplace book): Which version, A or B, makes the moral stronger, and why?
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Week 2 · Expanding a Fable

This week you will: make a short fable longer and richer by adding speeches and a described setting, without changing what it means.

Reading this week

- Aesop: fables about greed, such as the dog and the shadow, the goose that laid golden eggs, and the dog in the manger
- Bulfinch, Chapter II (Prometheus and Pandora, the Flood, Apollo and Daphne)
- Hesiod, *Theogony*, lines 507–616 (Prometheus)
- La Fontaine, *Fables* I.1 (printed below) and VI.17

Model texts

The Dog and the Shadow (Aesop, trans. Townsend)

A Dog, crossing a bridge over a stream with a piece of flesh in his mouth, saw his own shadow in the water and took it for that of another Dog, with a piece of meat double his own in size. He immediately let go of his own, and fiercely attacked the other Dog to get his larger piece from him. He thus lost both: that which he grasped at in the water, because it was a shadow; and his own, because the stream swept it away.

Last week's fable, told in verse by the French poet La Fontaine:

The Grasshopper and the Ant (La Fontaine, *Fables* I.1, trans. Elizur Wright)

*A Grasshopper gay
Sang the summer away,
And found herself poor
By the winter's first roar.
Of meat or of bread,
Not a morsel she had!
So a begging she went,
To her neighbour the ant,
For the loan of some wheat,
Which would serve her to eat,
Till the season came round.
"I will pay you," she saith,
"On an animal's faith,*

*Double weight in the pound
Ere the harvest be bound."
The ant is a friend
(And here she might mend)
Little given to lend.
"How spent you the summer?"
Quoth she, looking shame
At the borrowing dame.
"Night and day to each comer
I sang, if you please."
"You sang! I'm at ease;
For 'tis plain at a glance,
Now, ma'am, you must dance."*

A note on the grasshopper. Townsend's grasshopper is a he; La Fontaine's is a she. Neither translator slipped. In French the insect is *la cigale* — a cicada, and a feminine noun — so Wright kept "her"; Aphthonius' ancient version has cicadas too (Kennedy, p. 96). English fable-tellers turned the Mediterranean cicada into a grasshopper long ago, and the pronoun has wandered ever since. In your own fables, give each creature a sex and keep it.

Day 1 • Lesson with your teacher

1. **Recite** the definition of a fable. Read last week's final copy aloud.
2. **Narrate** "The Dog and the Shadow" after hearing it twice.
3. **How to expand a fable.** Hermogenes teaches that a fable can be told plainly and briefly, or stretched out by making up speeches for its characters. His example is a council of apes debating whether to build a city: told briefly, it takes two sentences; expanded, each ape makes a speech (Kennedy, pp. 74–75). Theon adds two ways to lengthen a fable: let the characters say more, and describe the setting, such as a river (Kennedy, pp. 25–26).

Copy into your commonplace book:

To expand a fable: (1) give the characters speeches, (2) describe the setting, (3) slow down the key moment. Keep the same story and the same moral.

4. Analyze the models.

1. Townsend's fable has no speeches. Where could the dog speak, and to whom?
2. What setting details does the fable mention? What could be described more fully?

3. What is the key moment, the one that should be slowed down?
 4. The moral is not stated. Write an epimythion for the fable in one sentence.
 5. Compare La Fontaine's verse fable with Townsend's prose fable from last week. What did La Fontaine add? What did the change from prose to verse do to the story?
5. **Grammar: nouns and their properties.** Copy into your grammar notebook:

Property	Choices	Example
Number	singular, plural	dog, dogs
Gender	masculine, feminine, neuter, common	ram, ewe, bridge, sheep
Person	first (speaking), second (spoken to), third (spoken of)	" <i>Dog</i> , you have lost your dinner!" (second)
Case	nominative (subject, predicate noun, direct address); objective (direct object, object of a preposition); possessive	The <i>dog</i> ran. He dropped the <i>meat</i> . The <i>dog's</i> shadow.

Day 2 • Copywork, style, grammar, outline

Copywork. Copy the last sentence of "The Dog and the Shadow."

Style and copia: verbs of speaking, and vivid verbs.

1. List ten verbs to use instead of *said* (for example *growled*, *muttered*). Next to each, write what feeling it shows.
2. Replace each weak verb in brackets with a vivid one:
 1. The dog [went] across the bridge.
 2. He [looked] at the water.
 3. The other dog [had] a larger piece of meat.
 4. He [got] the meat with his teeth.
 5. The stream [took] the meat away.

Grammar exercise A: properties of nouns. For each noun in bold, give its number, gender and case.

1. The **dog** crossed the bridge.
2. He carried a piece of **meat**.
3. The **dog's** shadow lay on the water.
4. The **stream** swept the meat away.
5. **Dogs** often fight over food.
6. "**Dog**, you have lost your dinner!"
7. He snapped at the **reflection**.
8. The grasshopper was a foolish **singer**.

Grammar exercise B: plurals. Write the plural: fox, wolf, sheep, ox, mouse, goose, fly, ant, deer, child.

Grammar exercise C: diagramming a direct object. A direct object receives the action of the verb. It goes on the base line after the verb, behind a short line that stands *on* the base line but does not cross it.

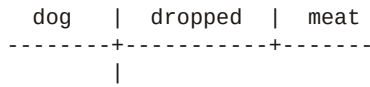


Diagram the subject, verb and direct object:

1. The dog dropped his meat.
2. The stream carried the meat.
3. The grasshopper begged food.
4. The ants dried grain.

Outline. Make a three-part outline of "The Dog and the Shadow." Next to each part, note one thing you will add there: a speech, a description, or a slowed-down moment.

Day 3 • Composition

Assignment: expand "The Dog and the Shadow" to 250–350 words. Your version must include:

1. A description of the bridge and the stream, using at least two senses.
2. At least two speeches: the dog speaking to himself, and the dog speaking to the "other dog" in the water.
3. The key moment, when he lets go of his meat, slowed down to several sentences.
4. An epimythion at the end.

Keep the same story and the same moral. Use at least four of your vivid verbs.

Day 4 • Revise, dictation, final copy

1. **Revise** with the fable checklist. Check especially: does every speech sound like a greedy dog?
2. **Dictation** from the model.
3. **Final copy** in your binder.
4. **Read it aloud.**
5. **Memory:** learn the definitions of promythion and epimythion.
6. **Reflect:** Did expanding the fable make the moral stronger or weaker? Why?