

My Homeschool

ENGLISH

Grade 4A - Semester 1



Knowledge Rich Language Arts For
Home Education

My Homeschool English 4A: Knowledge rich language arts for home education.

by Michelle Morrow and Beth Frankish

Edition 1

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Introduction

This English resource has been written to follow the Australian Curriculum V9, and the NSW Syllabus English (2023). It is a simple straightforward curriculum that cuts out the busy work and gets children writing, reading and thinking.

Our knowledge rich approach is inspired by Charlotte Mason, Natalie Wexler, and E.D Hirsch. Each term focuses on a core knowledge subject. For Term One our focus is Aesop's Fables and Term Two is world religions.

In preparing this resource, we have adapted ideas from Judith Hochman and Natalie Wexler's work *The Writing Revolution*. Their book takes a sentence level approach to writing and advocates that children must be taught explicitly how to write. Along with this, *My Homeschool English 4A* draws Nathaniel Swain's work on Story Grammar, along with the Syntax Project, which was developed to help schools teach structured literacy. Many of these resources are available for free online, but our resource has been tailored to suit teaching in a homeschool setting.

It is quite simple to teach as it requires minimal preparation and most lessons are self explanatory. **You will need to be present to start a lesson** as there is a lot of teacher/student interaction. In most cases one lesson shall represent one day's work. However, as your student's teacher you know the capabilities of your student, so you can best determine the amount of work that should be done. At times you might break the lesson down into a few days. Other times you might be able to do a few lessons in one sitting. Lessons need only take between 15 and 30 minutes.

This resource is one half year of work. It has been broken down into 18 weeks with four lessons per week. There are two 8 week sections with the 9th week used as a catch up or for a self-directed writing assignment if desired.

This book is intended for use in the first semester (Term 1 and Term 2) of Year 4/Grade 4 with a child aged 9 or 10.

Suggestions to Teachers

We have provided some teaching suggestions and useful information that will help you understand how to get the most out of this resource.

Use a Notebook

Write lessons in an exercise book. Whilst we have provided spaces for your child to fill in the blanks the spaces are only there as a visual representation to show where they need to insert their own content or for you to do the question with them orally. There is not adequate space to write in the words.

Presentation of the work is important. Instruct the student on using a margin, indentation of paragraphs and a title for the work. Encourage the student to use self editing skills and proofread their work. If they see something wrong allow them to correct it (using an eraser or liquid paper) prior to handing it over for marking.

Use the **back part of your notebook for the weekly spelling** or use a separate spelling book.

Copywork and Handwriting

A natural precursor to teaching dictation begins with copywork. Copywork is simply writing out by hand or copying from other written texts or models. This practice has been employed for centuries as a technique for teaching writing skills to young and old scholars.

Cursive handwriting was introduced in Grade 3.

Additional copywork is provided in your course's Virtual Cupboard.

Grammar and Punctuation

Every lesson should be a language lesson. We have aimed to teach grammar here in the context of writing. No grammar terms are given that won't be used within the student's work.

Take the opportunity to teach or reinforce certain aspects of grammar during your lessons, sprinkle in terms such as adjective, noun, pronoun and verb. Don't get too technical, you don't want to bamboozle the student.

When examining a passage, examine the punctuation also. Ask your student questions about specific punctuation marks. Have them read aloud the passage, paying attention to pause when the punctuation indicates. Remind them that they need to study not only the spelling of words, but also the punctuation used. The way you read a passage will help them work out the natural pauses for commas and full stops.

Keep an eye on the most common errors committed and focus on correcting those.

Weekly Spelling and Phonics

In this book we have moved beyond phonics and will be teaching word parts. Each week we will be focussing on different suffixes.

A suffix is a linguistic component that is added to the end of a word to modify its meaning or change its grammatical category. For example, in the word "happiness," the suffix "-ness" is added to the root word "happy" to form a noun meaning the state of being happy. Similarly, in the word "quickly," the suffix "-ly" is added to the adjective "quick" to turn it into an adverb.

Suffixes are one type of affix, which are morphemes (the smallest units of meaning) attached to words to create new words or alter their existing meanings.

Homophones (words that sound the same but have different spellings) and **heteronyms** (words that have the same spelling but sound different depending on the context) are also highlighted for your student to see. They do not need to focus on the spellings of these words they are just there to show the student the variation.

HOW TO STUDY THE WORD LISTS

Some lessons have a short note to help you teach the lesson however teaching the lessons is very straightforward.

Here is a general guideline for your child to study the word lists. Teach them to:

Look closely at the words to be memorised.

Say the words out loud.

Divide words into **syllables** when appropriate.

Find out the **meaning of the word** if they don't already know it.

Copy the word a minimum of three times.

ACTIVITIES

Each lesson is to be spread out over the week for 5 -10 mins a day (depending on how long the list is).

Here are some suggested activities to do during the word study time.

Day 1: Study words and copy into the spaces provided within this resource or in a separate spelling book.

Day 2: Split words into syllables. Add suffixes to the words: 'ing', 'er', 's' or 'es'. Not all words will have a suffix or plural. These can be entered into your child's spelling book.

Day 3: Prepare sentences using at least 3 words in the list.

OPTIONAL SPELLING TESTS

An optional spelling test can be completed on **Day 4** after the child has studied the words for a few days. Always correct misspelled words. Misspelled words can be added to a wordlist for revision in the following week.

ADDITIONAL DOLCH WORDS

The Dolch word list is a collection of 220 words commonly used in children's books and writings. These lists have been broken down into sections that most children have learnt by particular stages.

Read through these lists with your child and mark the ones they struggle with. Add them to your assessment week for further drill.

Even though many of these words are sight words, many can also be sounded out phonetically.

Reading, Comprehension and Vocabulary

Children are able to improve their writing by reading, however this is not the only component. Many of the observation and story lessons are starters for further writing exercises.

For a student to be able to comprehend a passage they need to have many skills cooperating to allow them to understand what they are reading. For some children this skill occurs naturally and we can 'test' it with simple oral questions or a written narration about the passage.

If you find that a student does not comprehend the passages you can look for various areas that will help you break down the process for them. Can they read the passage? If they need some help then you might try reading it with them or for them. If they cannot read it, trying to do dictation on the passage is not advisable.

Are they paying attention to the punctuation, pausing for commas or recognising a question mark?

Do they understand the vocabulary used?

The use of jargon, slang or clichés may also inhibit comprehension.

What the reader knows (prior knowledge) of the passage being discussed also helps them comprehend a passage.

Reading words in the rich context of whole books is a very effective, natural method for increasing your student's **vocabulary**. When

they find a word that they do not know, have them try to guess the meaning using the context of the extract and then either tell them the correct meaning or have them look it up in a dictionary. After they understand the meaning they can then put it into a sentence of their own either orally or written.

This is the ideal time to introduce the dictionary and alphabetical order.

Narration Lessons

The art of telling back or narration is employed in many lessons. This is an excellent skill to encourage. Fostering a keen memory and retention is a study skill that you want to develop into a life-long habit.

Composition

Some lessons give the student an opportunity to compose pieces of writing in a variety of text styles from an imaginative story to an informative text. Discuss what will be in their composition **orally first**. This oral lesson helps them to get their creative juices flowing and makes them realise that they do have something to write. If you skip this stage you will often find resistance from reluctant writers. However, many children will still find writing down their own compositions a daunting experience. This is because their vocabulary far exceeds their writing ability. Therefore, use wisdom in getting them to write their composition. Assess each child individually and have them dictate to you some compositions if necessary. In my experience this skill grows slowly and needs patience and nurturing. Some children are natural writers others take a while and at this age the skill level is quite varied. Charlotte Mason did not expect children to write out their compositions until age 10, so if they aren't ready - don't panic; there is always next year! The focus should really be on students being able to write accurate and coherent sentences.

Presentation of some of their compositions should be in a digital format in order to teach them some computer skills.

Poetry Appreciation and Memorisation

Each poetry selection should be read aloud to the student. Some poems your child may choose to memorise, this will require many readings. The content of poetry uses the imagination and speaks directly to the heart. The images in poetry are wonderful. You don't need to turn a poem inside out to appreciate it. With younger children, make it your goal to help them enjoy the poems, especially the rhythm, leaving the techniques and jargon for later years.

Pictures

Most of the pictures used in this book are copies of the works of great artists. A few questions are given with each picture, but the teacher should supplement these with many others.

Literature Discussions

A genre is the traditional classification of texts, such as fiction and non-fiction. This is the first classification your student should be able to make. You can ask them whether they think this is a true story or a pretend story.

You can begin introducing some discussion about other features of the stories and poems they are reading. Your aim here is to have your child notice and observe: why a text was written, who was it written to and what was the author trying to say. These discussions will help your child think about literature and give them some vocabulary for discussing literature in a literary way. Discussion prompts have been added to lessons.

Here are some short definitions of the text types used in this resource:

- Simple narrative: To tell a story.
- Procedure: To show how something is accomplished through a series of steps listed in chronological order.
- Persuasion: To put forward an argument or particular point of view.

- Simple report: To present factual information about a class of things, usually by classifying and describing their characteristics.

Writing Instruction:

For years writing instruction has been based on the idea that students can learn to write ‘naturally’ in the same way they learn to talk. However, we know now this doesn’t work for all children and with declining writing standards the need for explicit writing instruction is needed more than ever. With homeschooling this is easier as you are teaching alongside your child. We use direct instruction in this resource.

Assessment & Review Weeks

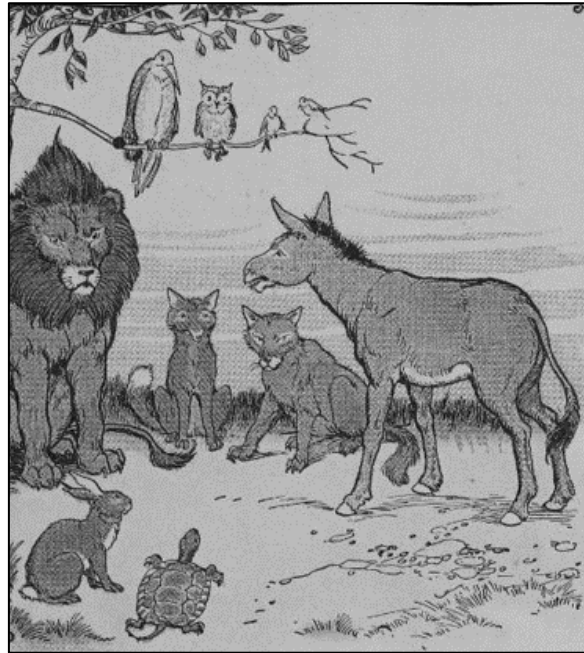
Week 9 and Week 18, are assessment and review weeks. Exercises have been provided to help review the content that the students have learnt in the previous weeks. You can write the answers in this section.

Answer Key

All lessons are hopefully self-explanatory, but an answer key can be found in your Year 4 Virtual Cupboard:

Questions with answers are marked with an asterisk *.

Term One - Introduction to Aesop's Fables



This subject area will acquaint students with timeless fables and stories that have brought joy to generations. Aesop's fables are ancient stories that use animals to teach important lessons about life and behaviour. Not only are they essential to learn because they carry timeless lessons, but many idioms in the English language, such as "a wolf in sheep's clothing" or "slow and steady wins the race," find their roots in these fables. By exploring Aesop's tales, we not only gain wisdom, but also uncover the origins of expressions that have become ingrained in our everyday language, making them a rich and enduring part of our cultural heritage.

Even journalists use idioms from Aesop's Fables in their articles! For instance, a student who has experienced "The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing" during this course will be better equipped to comprehend a news report describing a politician as "a wolf in sheep's clothing" in the future.

Knowing these tales will help your student with reading comprehension as well as build the background knowledge needed to better understand classic literature.

Week One—Prefix ‘ant/anti’

Teacher’s Note: A prefix is a small group of letters added to the beginning of a word to change its meaning. It’s like a little tag that helps us understand a word better. For example, in the word "unhappy," "un-" is a prefix that makes "happy" mean the opposite, so "unhappy" means "not happy."

Prefix: ant/anti

Meaning: against / opposite to

Here are some words that use this prefix:

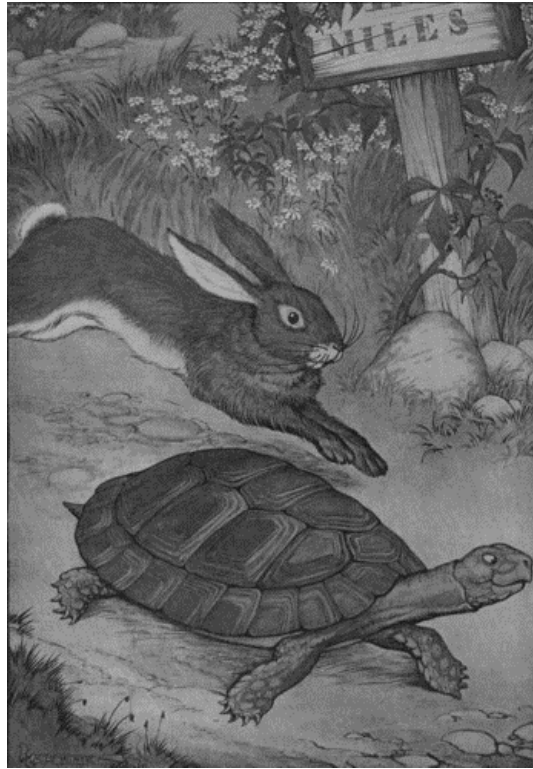
- anticlockwise
- antiseptic
- antidote
- antisocial

Example: anti + septic = antiseptic

- **septic** is an adjective that is related to infection by harmful microorganisms, particularly bacteria.
- **anti** is a prefix that means against or opposite to.
- **antiseptic** means something that works to **stop** harmful bacteria.

Base Word	Add Prefix	Copy	Copy	Copy
<i>clockwise</i>				
<i>septic</i>				
<i>hero</i>				
<i>climax</i>				
<i>social</i>				
<i>virus</i>				
<i>perspirant</i>				

LESSON 1—AESOP’S FABLES: THE HARE AND THE TORTOISE



"What a slow fellow you are!" said a hare to a tortoise. "I feel sorry for anyone who has to creep along as you do."

"Slow as I am, I can beat you," replied the tortoise.

"You think you can beat me, do you?" said the hare. "Let us race to that big tree."

The tortoise started at once and kept straight on. The hare went a little way and then lay down and took a nap. By and by he awoke and ran as fast as he could.

But when he reached the big tree the tortoise was there waiting for him.

"Slow and steady wins the race," said the tortoise.

ACTIVITY 1.1

1. Retell the fable of “The Hare and the Tortoise”.
2. What do you think the moral of this story is?
3. Have you ever heard the phrase “Slow and steady wins the race”? What do you think it means?
4. Write a similar story about two boys: Oliver, who learns everything easily, and Lee, who has to work hard to learn his lessons.
5. A prize has been offered for the pupil who spells the most words correctly.
6. Show how Lee won the prize.
7. Let your story contain some direct quotations.

LESSON 2—TYPES OF NOUNS

A concrete noun is a noun that you can experience with your senses (taste, touch, sight, sound and smell).

- chair
- house
- bread
- song

‘Love’ can be a noun*. We can give someone our love or take away our love, but it is not a concrete noun – why not?

The reason is, you cannot taste, touch, see, hear or smell love.

An abstract noun is a noun that you **cannot** experience with your senses (taste, touch, sight, sound and smell).

Abstract nouns name ideas or feelings. Here are some abstract nouns:

- anger
- sadness
- freedom
- happiness
- determination

LESSON 3—WRITING: SUBJECT AND PREDICATE

Remember:

- A sentence must contain at least one clause.
- A clause must contain a subject and a predicate.

Subject: something or someone to write about, contains a **noun** or **pronoun**

Predicate: Tells what the subject does or is, and contains a **verb**

The dog ate his dinner hungrily.

S P

The little girl sang beautifully for her grandmother.

S P

Australia is a wonderful place to live.

S P

There is a beautiful tree.

P S

ACTIVITY 1.3

Write these sentences in your book and finish by adding a predicate:

The old man _____

The cute puppy dog _____

Australia _____

The shepherd boy _____

Write these sentences in your book and add a subject:

_____ walked across the road.

_____ is a great place to go on a holiday.

_____ ran quickly.

_____ pretended there was a wolf.

LESSON 4—POETRY SELECTION TO BE MEMORISED

True worth is in being, not seeming;
In doing each day that goes by
Some little good; not in the dreaming
Of great things to do by and by.
For whatever men say in their blindness,
And spite of the fancies of youth,
There's nothing so kingly as kindness,
And nothing so royal as truth.

By Alice Cary

ACTIVITY 1.4

Copy the poem and memorise it.