

My Homeschool

ENGLISH

8A - Semester One



Knowledge Rich Language Arts For
Home Education

My Homeschool English 8A – Semester One

Knowledge Rich Language Arts for Home Education

by Michelle Morrow

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Introduction

My Homeschool English is a simple straightforward curriculum that cuts out the busy work and gets children writing, reading and thinking. Using knowledge rich themes, this language arts resource is your gateway to a holistic and effective English education.

Lessons include explicit writing instruction, reading practice, sentence level grammar, vocabulary, spelling, poetry appreciation, picture study, copy work, narration and compositions.

My Homeschool English requires minimal preparation. However, **you will need to be available for some lessons** because there is some teacher/student interaction. In most cases one lesson shall represent one day's work. However, as your child's teacher, you can best determine the amount of work that should be done. In most circumstances lessons will only take about 30 - 40 minutes.

This resource is six months of work which is aimed towards the first half of the homeschool year. It has been broken down into 18 weeks with three lessons per week plus one weekly spelling activity. There are two 8-week sections, and the 9th week used as a catch up assessment or revision.

Grade Level and Syllabus Alignment

This resource is intended for use with a child aged 13 - 14. It forms part of the My Homeschool curriculum for Year 8/Grade 8. It is to be used in conjunction with our other resources that work on literacy and writing.

This has been written to follow the Australian Curriculum v9 Year 8, the NSW Curriculum Year 8 (Stage 4), the WA Curriculum Year 8, NZ Curriculum Year 9 and Common Core Grade 8.

Writing Lesson with a Knowledge Rich Curriculum

Writing lessons are inspired by Judith Hochman¹ and Charlotte Mason. The Hochman method is an explicit style of teaching writing that shows children how to write sentences and paragraphs. The Charlotte Mason method teaches writing mostly through narration, dictation and copywork. Both these methods are well suited for teaching in a homeschool setting.

This resource includes weekly dictation, Charlotte Mason's primary method for teaching spelling and some narrations (tell me what you know). You will also find more narration exercises in other My Homeschool knowledge rich resources.

Providing children with a knowledge rich curriculum and explicit writing instruction is one of the tenets of this English curriculum. Research shows² that teaching writing skills, without knowledge, impairs a child's ability to write well in the future. Although it may not be as apparent in the primary years, a lack of knowledge leads to comprehension problems when children progress to writing about more complex topics. Our goal is to teach writing skills while using worthwhile content.

Whilst the Hochman method is much more structured than the Charlotte Mason method, there are many shared ideas. Firstly, Charlotte Mason believed it was important to teach writing within a literary context. Secondly, she believed that sentences are the place to start teaching grammar. Thirdly, both utilise picture study to stimulate written content. Fourthly, Charlotte was anti twaddle, this meant a knowledge rich curriculum was a priority. Finally, the last one to highlight (there are more) is they both believed in teaching writing across the curriculum, in all subjects. So, even though this resource doesn't follow the Charlotte Mason Method strictly, many ideas coalesce, and you can still use her method as you teach other subjects.

Theme for My Homeschool English 8A

Themes: Australian literature, film study, comedy.

Skills: Essay writing, creative writing, writing news articles.

¹ The Writing Revolution by J Hochman and N Wexler © 2017

² The Knowledge Gap by N Wexler © 2020

Before You Start Skills

This resource assumes that your child has already been introduced to the following skills and has completed *My Homeschool English 7B*. However, if your child hasn't, don't worry! We will continue to work on developing their skills this year. But be aware, your child may need some additional support with the following skills if they haven't learnt them before.

Prior Knowledge Skills

- Understands that a sentence has a predicate, a subject and it expresses a complete thought. (Appendix 1)
- Has a basic understanding of parts of speech (nouns, verbs, pronouns, adverbs, adjectives, conjunctions, prepositions).
- Understands paragraphs have a topic and concluding sentence. (Appendix 7)
- Can write a multi-paragraph composition and outlines.
- Can distinguish the difference between a thesis statement and a topic sentence.
- Can revise and edit own work.

Revision of Skills

For parents wanting to revise some of the writing, punctuation and grammar concepts used in this resource, we provide some initial teaching suggestions for teachers in the next section, plus we include teaching tips in some lessons, and we have an *Appendix*, at the back of this resource, for key concepts. Please use these when needed.

Week 1—Lesson 1 – Dictation

So the Star Man came. He brought charts of the heavens and models of the planets and the telescope with which he had first sighted his comet, when it was no more than a glimmer in the western sky. And when he had done talking, he picked up a piece of chalk—just an ordinary chalk that Mr Hagley used and the boys stole to throw at one another—and he turned to the blackboard. He drew a circle, which was the sun, and a smaller circle, which was the earth, and then a great arc which swept about both. ‘What might this be?’, he asked.

Alicia’s hand shot up. ‘Geometry,’ she answered.

From Bright Star by Gary Crew ©1996

ACTIVITY

1. Write the above passage from dictation.
2. Parse the following sentence of the dictation passage: place a ✓ above the article, a (c.) above the conjunctions, underline the nouns, highlight the **verb** and write a (p.) above the pronouns.

He brought charts of the heavens and models of the planets and the telescope with which he had first sighted his comet, when it was no more than a glimmer in the western sky.

LESSON 2—PARENTHETICAL PHRASES

In the dictation passage (Lesson 1) there was a **parenthetical phrase**—can you find it?

Parentheses are used to enclose explanatory matter which is independent of the grammatical construction of the sentence.

I'll give you an example—although you may not need one—to help you identify it. There you go I just gave you an example! A parenthetical phrase is a break in thought from the main sentence that will help the reader (which is you at the moment) enhance the meaning of the root sentence. It is usually a digression from the topic or a further clarification. It doesn't need to be a dash (actually they are called an em dash because they are a little longer than a hyphen about the length of an m) it could also be using parenthesis (round brackets), square brackets [like these], or the easiest form would be to separate the phrase with two commas.

An **appositive** can function like a **parenthetical phrase** because it often provides additional, non-essential information about a noun. However, not all appositives are parenthetical phrases, and not all parenthetical phrases are appositives.

1. Highlight the parenthetical phrases used in the above explanation.
2. Add punctuation, including parenthesis, to the following sentences.
 - A. Queen Elizabeth II 1926-2022 was a beloved Queen.
 - B. It is said and I can believe that it is true that many still believe in miracles.
 - C. It was at that moment 10 AM the doctor goes on to say that his patient Betty Charmers met him.
3. Write a sentence with a parenthetical phrase.

LESSON 16—HAROLD HOLT NEWS BRIEF

Harold Holt Lost at Sea

December 17, 1967. Harold Holt, Australia’s Prime Minister, apparently drowned today while swimming in the sea near his holiday home in Portsea, Victoria, just 30 miles from Melbourne.

Holt was known as a strong swimmer and skydiver, but a spokesman revealed that the Prime Minister nearly drowned in a similar incident just a few weeks ago.

Hundreds of divers, including teams from the civilian rescue service and navy frogmen, joined in the hunt for Mr Holt.

Holiday-makers watched and waited while soldiers checked along the beaches along a 30 mile front while out at sea surface craft helped the divers in their efforts. Every available helicopter was mustered to the search, including a number of those ready to go to help Australian forces in Vietnam.

America’s President Johnson has requested immediate notification of any news. The Queen has also expressed her deep concern.

If Mr Holt is not found alive, Lord Casey, Australia’s Governor-General, will appoint an interim Prime Minister. The most likely choice will be the vice-premier, John McEwan. Mr McEwan is a member of the minority Country Party, which shared in a coalition government with Mr Holt’s Liberal Party.

From 20th Century Day by Day. Editor E Mercer © 1999

ACTIVITY

1. Identify the parenthetical phrase used in this lesson. What punctuation marks were used?
2. The author uses a number of indirect quotes to strengthen the internal structure of the article. Who were they from?
3. Although it is just speculation that the Prime Minister has drowned, what other ‘proof’ does the reporter add in the article that helps to substantiate the fact that Mr Holt has drowned. Is this from a reliable source?

Week 5—Lesson 17 – Dictation

Australia Wins the America's Cup

September 26, 1983. After 132 years and 24 vain attempts the America's Cup finally left the United States. Throughout Australia, and among the vociferous contingent of Australian supporters in Newport, Rhode Island, the celebrations began as Alan Bond's Australia II, captained by John Bertrand, came from 3—1 down to defeat the American defender Liberty, skippered by Dennis Conner, in today's final race in the series of seven.

The Americans, who have held the trophy in New York Yacht Club since 1851, have vowed to take revenge.

From 20th Century Day by Day. Editor E Mercer © 1999

ACTIVITY

1. Write the above passage from dictation.
2. Parse the following sentence of the dictation passage: place a (p.) above the pronouns, underline the nouns, highlight the **verbs**, place a (c.) above the conjunction, draw a box around the adverb, circle the adjectives and place an arrow to the noun they modify. Place a bracket around the prepositional phrase.

The Americans, who have held the trophy in New York Yacht Club since 1851,
have vowed to take revenge.

LESSON 18—NEWS BRIEF BIAS

News Brief Featured Article

Bias in news reporting occurs when a journalist's language, tone, or focus subtly or overtly favours one perspective over others. While bias can sometimes be intentional, it often arises from word choice, framing, or the omission of alternative viewpoints. Identifying bias is essential for critically analysing news and distinguishing between objective reporting and opinion.

The America's Cup Example

The America's Cup article (Lesson 17), reflects bias through its celebratory tone and language. By describing Australia's victory as the culmination of '132 years and 24 vain attempts,' the article highlights Australian determination and success, aligning its focus with an Australian audience's pride. Terms like 'vociferous contingent' evoke excitement, while the phrase 'finally left the United States' suggests an overdue triumph.

In contrast, the article portrays the American defenders less favourably. The use of 'vain attempts' to describe their 132-year dominance and the phrase 'vowed to take revenge' cast the Americans in a dismissive or negative light. These choices create a perception that the story is written to celebrate Australia's achievement rather than to provide balanced coverage.

This article, despite its factual elements, leans more toward an **opinion piece** than a neutral news article. While it reports on the event, its tone and emphasis on Australia's perspective suggest a subjective slant. A true news article would aim to provide equal weight to both the Australian and American perspectives, exploring the significance of the trophy's long history and the reactions on both sides.

Other Examples of Bias in News

1. Framing Bias:

News outlets often frame stories to align with their audience's interests. For example, coverage of a political debate might focus on one candidate's strong points while downplaying another's, depending on the publication's political leaning.

2. **Selection of Details:**

During the 2016 US Presidential election, some outlets focused heavily on Hillary Clinton's email controversy, while others prioritised Donald Trump's personal behaviour. By choosing which details to emphasise, each outlet shaped readers' perceptions.

3. **Emotive Language:**

Reporting on protests often reveals bias through language. Describing protestors as 'activists' conveys a positive or neutral tone, while calling them 'rioters' suggests aggression or unlawfulness, even if referring to the same event.

Identifying Bias

- To spot bias, consider the following:
 - **Word Choice:** Are emotionally charged words or phrases used?
 - **Tone:** Does the article favour one side through celebratory or dismissive language?
 - **Balance:** Are multiple perspectives presented fairly?
 - **Focus:** Does the article highlight certain details while ignoring others?

Why Recognising Bias Matters

- Bias can influence public opinion, shape cultural narratives, and even polarise societies. Readers who critically evaluate news stories, looking for signs of bias, are better equipped to form informed opinions and seek alternative viewpoints.
- The America's Cup article serves as a reminder that even celebratory reporting, while engaging, can lean into bias by omitting balance. Recognising this helps distinguish between news and opinion, fostering more nuanced and critical engagement with media.

ACTIVITY

Read the feature article *News Brief Bias* in this lesson. Highlight key words (see Appendix 6 & 7). Write a summary of what you have learnt.

INTRODUCTION TO STORM BOY NOVELLA & FILM STUDY

This novella and film study which covers the novella of *Storm Boy* by Colin Thiele and the 1976 movie adaptation provides students with a comprehensive understanding of storytelling in different mediums. Through analysis, comparison, and persuasive writing, students will develop critical thinking and communication skills while forming their own opinions about books and films. This study can also foster a love for literature and film, encouraging students to explore more stories in various formats.

In this unit students will study the story of *Storm Boy*, comparing both the film and the novella. Whilst this is primarily an English study it encompasses other subjects. These include:

- Australian waterways, care and management (Geography).
- Traditional owner land rights (Cross Curriculum Priority).
- Respectful relationships (Personal Health and Development).
- Earth Science.

You will need:

- A copy of the book *Storm Boy* by Colin Thiele © 1963. Note: A Read Aloud version is available however the book version is better to use if you can as you will need to reference particular passages.
- Access to the movie *Storm Boy* 1976 version (not the 2019 version). This is currently available on Netflix and can be watched through various streaming services.
- You will find a comparison of the movie and the book in the *Storm Boy Links* found in the Virtual Cupboard.

Note: It is better if you do not watch the movie before you read the book.

Virtual Cupboard Storm Boy Links

Additional links that support this study can be found in the Virtual Cupboard.

LESSON 52—MEMES: THE MODERN ART OF HUMOUR



Memes have become a defining feature of modern humour, blending visual and textual elements to deliver quick, impactful laughs. They are more than just fleeting jokes on the internet—they are a cultural phenomenon, evolving as fast as the platforms they inhabit. Understanding how memes work and what makes them funny is key to appreciating their role as both entertainment and social commentary.

The Origin of Memes

The term ‘meme’ was first coined by evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins in his 1976 book *The Selfish Gene*. He used it to describe ideas or cultural elements that spread and evolve, much like genes. However, in the digital age, memes have taken on a new life, becoming snippets of humour, relatability, or satire that are shared across social media.

What Makes a Meme Funny?

A meme’s humour often stems from its ability to combine familiar visuals with surprising or absurd text. This mix of the relatable and the unexpected creates incongruity, a key element of comedy. Timing and cultural context also play crucial roles. A meme might reference a trending event, a viral video, or a universal experience, making it instantly recognisable and shareable.

Types of Memes

Memes take many forms, from image macros and reaction GIFs to video edits and absurdist humour. Each type caters to a different style of comedy and audience.

- **Image Macros:** These are classic memes featuring a bold image with a humorous caption. A famous example is *Grumpy Cat*, whose perpetually displeased expression and sarcastic captions like 'I had fun once, it was awful' make it a staple of internet humour.



- **Reaction Memes:** These focus on expressing emotions or reactions in exaggerated ways. The 'I'm Fine' meme, showing a cartoon dog in a burning room saying, 'I'm Fine,' humorously reflects moments when people pretend everything is okay despite chaos.
- **Food Memes:** 'Me: I'll Just Have One Chip' Scenario: A photo of an empty chips (crisps) bag and the caption, 'One chip led to another.' Why It's Funny: It perfectly captures the universal experience of being unable to stop eating chips.

Memes in Action

To create or enjoy memes, it helps to understand their structure and cultural relevance. Imagine a well-known template like the 'Woman Yelling at a Cat' meme. Its humour lies in pairing two unrelated images—a dramatic argument and a confused cat—with captions that add unexpected layers of meaning. For instance,

one side might represent a stressed student yelling about deadlines, while the cat calmly represents their apathetic sleep schedule. The humour works because it exaggerates everyday frustrations in a format that's visually absurd.

Memes are a fast-evolving form of humour, but their essence lies in their ability to connect people through shared laughter. By combining wit, creativity, and cultural awareness, memes remind us that humour is as much about participation as it is about creation.

ACTIVITY

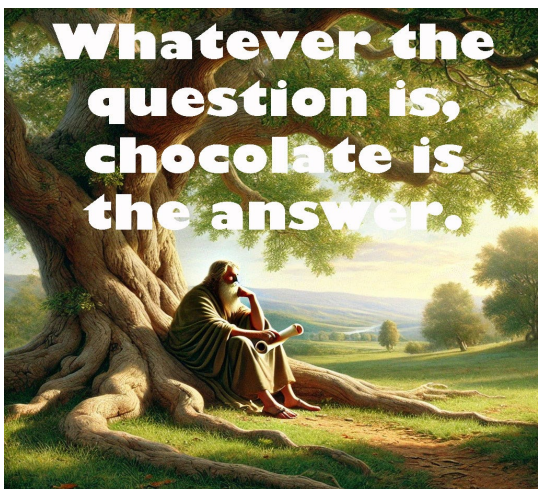
1. Explain the meaning of the following memes and why they are funny.



A.



B.



C.



D.