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CHAPTER 1

Words from Writers about Writing

This chapter consists of an interview with two respected and well-known authors, Paul Maier and Julie Stiegemeyer—first, a little bit about them.

Dr. Paul Maier is the Russell H. Seibert Professor of Ancient History at Western Michigan University. He is also a Lutheran pastor and has served as the Second Vice-President of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. He is a graduate of Harvard University and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. On a Fulbright Scholarship, Dr. Maier also studied at the University of Heidelberg, Germany, and Basel, Switzerland. Dr. Maier is the author of numerous articles and books, both fiction and nonfiction. His historical documentaries include *Pontius Pilate* and *The Flames of Rome*. He also wrote the best-selling *A Skeleton in God's Closet* and its sequel *More Than a Skeleton: It Was One Man against the World*. Dr. Maier also produced a translation of *Josephus—The Essential Works* and *The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius of Caesarea*, and coauthored *The Da Vinci Code: Fact or Fiction?*, which critically refuted the 2003 best-seller *The Da Vinci Code*. Maier has also written a number of children's books, including *The Very First Christmas* and *The Very First Easter*. More than five million Maier books are now in print in a dozen languages, as well as over 250 scholarly articles in professional journals. Dr. Maier lectures widely; appears frequently in national radio, television, and newspaper interviews; and has received numerous awards. He has also produced three four-hour video series dealing with Jesus, St. Paul, and the Early Church.

Julie Stiegemeyer writes books for children, feature articles, and Sunday School curriculum. Julie lives in Fort Wayne, Indiana, where her husband serves as a pastor. She was born and raised in Denver, Colorado, and graduated as a Lutheran teacher from Concordia, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Later, she received a Master of Arts for Teachers (MAT) in English Education from Indiana University. Julie has taught sixth grade in a

Lutheran school as well as English as a Second Language. She also edited *Higher Things: Dare to Be Lutheran*, a quarterly youth magazine. Her numerous children's books include *Things I See in Church*, *Colors I See in Church*, *Things I Do in Church*, *Things I Hear in Church*, *Things I See at Easter*, *Things I See at Christmas*, *Things I See at Baptism*, *Stephen Stands Strong*, *Saint Nicholas: The Real Story of the Christmas Legend*, *Thanksgiving: A Harvest Celebration*, *Baby in the Manger*, *Bright Easter Day*, *Bethlehem Night*, *Mommy Promises*, and *Cheep! Cheep!* Julie is also an author for the Growing in Christ Sunday School materials, numerous journal and magazine articles, and poetry. She presents at workshops, conferences, and retreats on topics relating to writing and growing in the Christian faith.

Paul Maier and Julie Stiegemeyer are dissimilar in many ways. They grew up in different parts of the country, went to different schools, and differ in age and gender. But they also have much in common. Both came to know of God's love and care for them at an early age. Both believe in Jesus as God's Son who was born long ago in Palestine to a virgin named Mary, lived a sinless life and died a tormented death in our place to redeem and save us, and who rose victorious from the dead on Easter morning. Paul and Julie also share a love for words and a gift for using words in writing to communicate with others. Both have written extensively and thank God for the opportunity to tell and write about Jesus. We asked Paul and Julie several questions about their experiences in communicating through writing. Their responses offer valuable insights for all who desire to grow in their ability to communicate more effectively through the use of words, and especially for those who belong to God through faith in Christ Jesus. Their responses follow.

Question: One of the qualities of good writing is freshness—the quality of creating text that comes off as real, not contrived or artificial. What process or strategies do you use to generate ideas for what to write?

Paul: I'm usually prompted to write in response to something that puzzles me or even angers me—a desire to dig deeper for explanations to answer the whys, to correct bad or sensational pseudo-scholarship, or to fill an obvious need. One example of writing to fill a need resulted in my book, *Josephus—the Essential Works*. Few people were reading the crucially important information available in the works of first-century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (AD 37–100) because of the huge amount of his material and the poor translations of it. I felt that some very valuable perspectives were being overlooked.

Josephus, for example, supplies about a thousand times as much data on Herod the Great as does Matthew's Gospel. Twice, Josephus refers to Jesus. His second reference (in *Antiquities* 20:200) concerns the episode involving James, whom he defines as “the brother of Jesus who was called the Christ” (from Maier's *Josephus—The Essential Works* [Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1994]). Earlier, in the middle of his reports on Pontius Pilate's administration, Josephus has a longer passage on Jesus. For centuries, this had been dismissed as a Christian interpolation. But what is doubtless the original wording of *Antiquities* 18:63 has now been restored. It reads, “At this time there was a wise man called Jesus, and his conduct was good, and he was known to be virtuous. Many people among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified, and to die. But those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion, and that he was alive. Accordingly, he was perhaps the Messiah, concerning whom the prophets have reported wonders. And the tribe of the Christians, so named after him, has not disappeared to this day” (from Schlomo Pines's *An Arabic Version of the Testimonium Flavianum and Its*

Implications [Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1971]).

I'm moved to write because I believe I have something important that needs to be recorded so that it may be shared with others. It's hardly ever a case of “Gee, what can I write about now for my next article or book?” I am prompted to write when I detect unanswered questions, voids of information, or obvious needs.

Question: Do you enjoy writing?

Paul: Sure. For me another motivation for writing is just to have fun, which I indulged in the case of my novels *A Skeleton in God's Closet* and *More Than a Skeleton*. Though these books involved doing research and applying what I learned, the fun came in developing the characters and giving them personality, placing them in an interesting setting, and giving them conditions and stressors to which they must react and respond.

Question: Fictional books, such as those you mention, make for a great way to learn about history while at the same time getting you to think about your faith and why you believe as you do about God and the world He has created for us. How do you begin what must be the enormous task of writing a piece of historical fiction?

Paul: I begin by doing three things: research, research, and more research. Careful research is vitally important if you are writing nonfiction. But good research also helps fiction. Then, when you have all the data you need, you superimpose a good outline on it and start writing. In the case of fiction, be prepared for exciting changes in the plot that you hadn't thought of earlier. In that sense, one of the great trade secrets of authorship is this: you can't believe how close writing is to reading.

Question: That's interesting. What exactly do you mean?

Paul: When you read something, you gain insights and grow in understanding and perception because of what the action, thoughts, and

CHAPTER 2

Teaching and Learning Language Arts from a Christian Perspective

First among Subjects

With the exception of religion, language arts leads all school subjects. First considered and continually pursued by those on an educational journey, language arts opens doors for students to knowledge, exploration, comprehension, and response in all subject areas. Language arts deals with communication through words. Words express human emotions, entertain, motivate, and inform.

Language arts can be understood and approached according to the six separate arts of reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and representing. These arts are interconnected and are never experienced in isolation. Nevertheless, three developmental stages can be identified in emerging proficiency. First, students need a solid foundation in communication skills. Upon this foundation they next build comprehension and develop an understanding of how to apply their communication skills. Then, finally, students combine their abilities and understandings and respond as informed producers and critical consumers of the means of communication.

Language arts and all other subjects can be taught and learned in Christian schools through the following overall goals, which have been the hallmark of the Christian education materials prepared by Concordia Publishing House through the years. These materials aim to assist teachers and leaders so that students

- through the Word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, may know God, especially His seeking and forgiving love in Christ, and may respond in faith and grow into Christian maturity;
- see themselves as the reconciled, redeemed children of God and individual members of

Christ's body, the Church, and live happily in peace with God, themselves, and their fellow human beings;

- may be encouraged to express their joy in worship of God and in loving service to others;
- may, by the grace of God, value all of God's creative work in His world and Church, witness openly to Christ as the Savior of all people, and participate actively in God's mission to the Church and the world; and
- may joyfully live in the Christian hope of new life in Christ now and in eternity.

Language Arts and the Things of God

For God's people, language arts connects with matters of faith in the following ways:

- God used words to call the world into being.
- He sent Jesus, the Word made flesh, to save us.
- God gives us language so that we may learn and grow in Him through His Word as it is heard, read, and studied and as it is received together with the elements in the Sacraments.
- God blesses us with language to admonish, comfort, and build up our sisters and brothers in the faith.
- God's grace leads us to use words to thank, praise, and petition God and to bring to others the Good News of Jesus and His forgiving love.

God Is the Author of Communication

God instituted communication. Through words and actions, He tells us about Himself. His majesty and awesome power are revealed to us through His creation. The psalmist proclaims, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1).

When He created our first parents as the crown of His handiwork, they were holy and interacted in perfect harmony with God and each other. But sin destroyed that full and completely satisfying communion, causing God such anger and remorse that He later devastated the world in a great flood, saving only faithful Noah and his family. Afterward, when sinful pride gained the upper hand among Noah's descendants, God delivered judgment, introducing varieties of human languages and scattering the human race throughout the world in separate cultural settlements. God chose from among these a people for His own and kept alive among them the promise of a Savior who would come to save all people from their sins. This promise continued a promise initially given to our first parents, Adam and Eve, after the very first sin.

By His own hand, God wrote the Ten Commandments by which He desired His people to live and delivered them to His people through the prophet Moses. Through the years, God continually communicated with the people through other prophets, telling them about their sin and its harsh consequences and about the Savior who would come to take all human sin and its consequences upon Himself.

Moses and other writers recorded the history of God's saving actions among His people together with His promises as God's Spirit gave them the very words, thoughts, and ideas to record. "For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21).

Finally, Jesus, the Savior, was born. The writer of Hebrews summarizes, "Long ago, at many times and in various ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son" (1:1–2). As He lived and served God and others in complete and flawless obedience, Jesus brought healing, truth, and peace to those touched by His love.

Through His Son, Jesus, God reconciled Himself and fallen humanity. Long ago, the apostle Paul wrote these words to describe our Savior to

Timothy: "There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:5–6). Reconciled with our heavenly Father, we can now communicate regularly and even continuously with Him in prayer. In Jesus' name we may now "with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

After Jesus rose from the dead and ascended bodily into heaven, the Holy Spirit descended upon believers in Jerusalem. These believers then began to speak in languages they had not learned, proclaiming the Good News of Jesus' forgiveness and salvation to those of various cultures assembled there from all over the world. By God's grace, the barriers in communication that originated as judgment after the incident at Babel were set aside by the Holy Spirit so that people of all languages and cultures might learn of Jesus and believe in Him. As followers of God through faith in Christ Jesus, we carry on the work of those first Christian believers, joining in the task of bringing the Good News of His forgiveness and salvation to all people everywhere.

The Ability to Read

Our alphabet represents the letters used in the words we speak and write to convey meaning. God has given us the ability to understand the sounds and symbols we combine and manipulate in our language to form words, sentences, paragraphs, and books. God has blessed us with people who have translated the most significant of all books—the Bible—into our own language so that we can read, hear, and learn the Word of God. In His Word, God tells us about Himself, specifically about His person and nature and the salvation He freely offers through His Son. Further, God invites and commands us to read and study His Word as the very means through which He gives us His gifts.

Considering the meaning and influence God's Word had in the life of a young man named Timothy, Paul reflects, "From childhood you

Using the Twelve Standards for the English Language Arts Developed by the IRA/NCTE

The International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) have developed twelve standards for the English language arts. These organizations believe that English language arts standards must be grounded in what we know about language and language learning. If the standards do not have this very important foundation, then they could undermine our nation's commitment to educating all students and to emerging conceptions of literacy. The standards presented here grew out of current research and theory about how students learn—in particular, how they learn language.

The vision guiding these standards is that all students must have the opportunity and resources to develop the language skills they need to pursue their life's goals and to participate fully as informed, productive members of society. These standards assume that literacy growth begins before children enter school as they experience and experiment with literacy activities: reading, writing, and associating spoken words with their graphic representations. Recognizing this fact, these standards encourage the development of curriculum and instruction that make productive use of the emerging literacy abilities that children bring to school. Furthermore, the standards provide ample room for the innovation and creativity essential to teaching and learning. They are not prescriptions for particular curriculum or instruction.

The IRA and the NCTE have given permission for the standards to be included in Concordia Language Arts Curriculum Guides and to be elaborated upon to incorporate elements of the Christian faith. These English language arts standards are included as follows, together with a discussion of how these standards may be uniquely applied in Lutheran schools.

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. **Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.**

God has gifted humans with amazing intellectual capacities. Among these is the ability to represent thoughts and concepts as symbols and to record information through these symbols so that it may be retrieved by the recorder or by others at a later time. Through reading and writing, we communicate with purposes of informing, enlightening, entertaining, and motivating. Through the words God Himself has caused to be written, we have come to know not only God's will for our lives, but also the means of salvation He offers freely through His Son, our Savior.

Because we are able to read, we are able to learn about life in other periods of time, including the beginning of the human experience in the Garden of Eden and the eternal joy we will one day know and forever experience in heaven. We can read about life in other parts of the world and about our explorations into the reaches of space.

Very young children can experience print as they interact with story books and other age-appropriate materials. They can take part in discussions about the characters and plot and project what they think may happen next as the story unfolds. As parents, siblings, and caregivers read and tell stories from the Bible, children learn about God's power and might and their uniqueness as children individually loved, created, and saved by God.

As children grow, they learn to experience increasing varieties of reading materials from numerous contexts and written for many purposes. These include the Bible and devotional material, articles, books, novels, newspaper and magazine articles, poetry, plays, personal and family documents, reference materials, journals, letters, and games.

Spoken and visual texts also assist students in learning the interconnectedness of various forms of communication. As children grow, they do well when encouraged to read those texts that are relevant, in line with individual interests, and at various levels so that they are able to both improve reading fluency and experience the challenge and mastery of more difficult texts.

Through a variety of reading materials, children will be able to recognize and reflect upon the elements common among all people. All are under the curse of sin and need a Savior. Jesus Christ came to redeem and save all people. Long ago, He took upon Himself the punishment for all the sins ever committed. Understanding these things helps the children of God to share the Good News of Jesus with those who have not yet heard and do not yet believe.

2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

Like a good friend, a good book teaches us about the world, about others, and about ourselves. Literary works record the essence of humanity. Through many literary genres, the human experience is recorded and finds creative expression.

As children experience a variety of genres, they become familiar with metaphor, imagery, rhyme, and other figurative devices. They learn to identify and understand characters and plot, conflict and tension, climax and resolution. They become able to differentiate between fantasy and reality, fact and fiction.

Literary texts provide students with the opportunity to grow as they reflect on the dilemmas faced by others, their actions, and the consequences

that result from these actions. As children of God through faith in Christ Jesus, students can learn to discern whether a character's attitudes, actions, and behaviors reflect the old sinful nature into which all of us are born or the new nature imparted to believers in Baptism, which God's Spirit daily causes to arise. They can learn to understand that each follower of Jesus remains simultaneously saint and sinner and needs the forgiveness and strength our God promises to impart through Christ Jesus, our Lord.

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

As children grow in reading proficiency, many different skills and understandings come into play. Children realize what they must give to the reading process in order to achieve the desired result. In becoming familiar with a variety of genres, they come to know what each genre will require of them. They come to know, for example, that locating information in a phone book requires a different skill set than reading a short story—although both require the ability to work with words. Children also need to acquire a variety of strategies for understanding and evaluating spoken and visual language. Comprehension occurs when readers are able to take in and process information correctly and appropriately and to make the necessary application of this knowledge in their life.

Ongoing dialogue that occurs throughout the reading process helps students to make predictions and then to modify their predictions as more information or clues become available. Finally, they are able to reach conclusions and explain their conclusions by virtue of what they have read. Students demonstrate the ability to interpret text when they apply its meaning in their lives. They evidence competency in evaluat-

CHAPTER 4

Language Arts Curriculum Standards for Students in Grade 6

This chapter includes language arts standards that have been compiled from the individual state departments of education. They are organized, grade by grade, into the following five areas:

1. Reading 
2. Literature 
3. Writing 
4. Speaking, Listening, and Viewing (Media Literacy) 
5. World Languages 

The Concordia standards have been systematized according to the following numerical designations to indicate grade level, area, category, and performance objective:

- The first digit indicates the grade level (e.g., the 2 in 2.5.1.3 designates that the performance expectation is for grade 2).
- The second digit indicates the area of language arts, as listed above, addressed by the standard (e.g., the 5 in 2.5.1.3 designates that the standard is in the area of World Languages).
- The third digit identifies a category within the area. These categories are the same at every grade level (e.g., the 1 in 2.5.1.3 relates to the category *Use the target language to develop an understanding of customs, arts, literature, history, and geography associated with its use*, which is the first category of World Languages at every grade level).
- The fourth digit indicates the number of the specific performance expectation. These expectations will vary from level to level (e.g., 2.5.1.3, as found in the World Languages area of the grade 2 standards relating to the category *Use the target language to develop an understanding of customs, arts, literature, history, and geography associated with its use*, refers to the third item in that category).

Chapter 5 provides faith-integration activities organized by category. These activities provide many opportunities to teach aspects of the Christian faith in conjunction with each area of the language arts curriculum. Each activity is keyed to a specific performance expectation.

A complete list of language arts standards performance expectations for this grade level is provided on the remaining pages of this chapter.



6.1 Sixth-grade students will acquire reading skills and fluency to gain information and ideas, while using strategies for constructing meaning that connect what is read to present understandings so as to build a strong foundation for growth as lifelong learners.

6.1.1 Develop reading proficiency.

6.1.1.1 Apply decoding strategies to read unknown words.

6.1.1.2 Read narrative and expository text fluently and accurately and with appropriate pacing, intonation, and expression.

6.1.1.3 Adjust reading rate to support comprehension of text.

6.1.1.4 Evaluate reading progress, apply goal-setting strategies, and monitor progress in meeting goals.

6.1.2 Build an extensive vocabulary.

6.1.2.1 Distinguish denotative and connotative word meanings.

6.1.2.2 Identify word parts such as prefixes, suffixes, and root words.

6.1.2.3 Identify origins and meanings of frequently used foreign words in English, and use them accurately in speaking and writing.

6.1.2.4 Recognize and interpret figurative expressions, such as similes, metaphors, and words with multiple meanings.

6.1.2.5 Explain shades of meaning in related words.

6.1.2.6 Demonstrate the ability to effectively use the dictionary, thesaurus, and glossary.

6.1.2.7 Check expository text for unknown words or words with unusual meanings, using word, sentence, and paragraph clues.

6.1.3 Comprehend what is read.

6.1.3.1 Apply pre-reading strategies, setting a purpose and rate for reading.

6.1.3.2 Self-question, self-correct, infer, visualize, and predict and check by using a cuing system while reading.

6.1.3.3 Apply post-reading strategies, reflecting, analyzing, and drawing conclusions.

6.1.3.4 Analyze text that uses the compare-and-contrast organizational pattern.

6.1.3.5 Connect and clarify main ideas by identifying their relationships to others sources and topics.

6.1.3.6 Clarify understanding of texts by creating outlines, logical notes, summaries, or reports.

6.1.3.7 Study charts, graphs, maps, and displays to find information that helps clarify, explain, and connect concepts.

6.1.3.8 Identify major themes and supporting details.

6.1.3.9 Determine the adequacy and appropriateness of the evidence for an author's conclusions.

6.1.3.10 Distinguish fact and opinion, giving examples from the text.

6.1.3.11 Demonstrate understanding of a variety of texts (narrative, expository, technical, persuasive).

6.1.3.12 Apply reading content to self and others.

6.1.4 Read for a purpose.

6.1.4.1 Locate and apply information in titles, tables of contents, and glossaries.

CHAPTER 5

Information and Activities for Integrating the Faith as Keyed to Grade 6 Standards

The language arts standards included in this chapter have been compiled from the individual state departments of education and organized, grade by grade, into the following five areas:

1. Reading 
2. Literature 
3. Writing 
4. Speaking, Listening, and Viewing (Media Literacy) 
5. World Languages 

The Concordia standards have been systematized according to the following numerical designations to indicate grade level, area, category, and performance objective as described on the first page of chapter 4.

Performance expectations are numbered sequentially (e.g., 2.5.1.3 is found in grade 2, in the area of World Languages, relating to the category *Use the target language to develop an understanding of customs, arts, literature, history, and geography associated with its use*, and is the third item in that category). A complete list of language arts standards performance expectations for this grade level is provided in chapter 4.

On the pages of chapter 5, you will find an easy-to-reference two-column format for faith integration with the language arts standards. The left-hand column under the heading “Information by Topic” provides helpful teaching background information and insights relevant for integrating some aspect of the Christian faith. The number following the topic identifies the performance expectation to which the topic relates (see chapter 4). Beside each entry, in the right-hand column under the heading “Discussion Points/Activities,” you will find ideas helpful for planning and organizing student learning experiences that reinforce and expand upon these faith connections.

Be sure to consult the index at the end of this volume for a complete listing of topics and where they may be found.



6.1 Sixth-grade students will acquire reading skills and fluency to gain information and ideas, while using strategies for constructing meaning that connect what is read to present understandings so as to build a strong foundation for growth as lifelong learners.

6.1.1 Develop reading proficiency.

Decoding Strategies

Decoding helps students recognize all words with greater frequency, both the regular (rule-oriented words) and the irregular (the exceptions to the rule). Since comprehension falters when decoding is unsuccessful, it is necessary to teach students quick and accurate ways to decode so as not to interrupt their reading. If students are reading and come across a word they don't recognize, ask them what would make sense in place of this unknown word. Another helpful hint to decoding is to tell the student to skip the word, read on, and then reread to determine what word may go in that spot. Another way to decode is to look at chunks of the word or word parts that the student knows and work out the unknown word from that point of view. Comment that portions of God's Word were also written so that some decoding is required. Consider for example Ezekiel 34:11–16. Ask, "Who are the Shepherd and sheep described in this portion of Scripture? How are the injured bound up and the weak strengthened?" (6.1.1.1)

- On the Concordia Theological Seminary Web site, scroll down to Pastoral Helps, and choose a sermon to print and read. Pick out one paragraph from the sermon to first read out loud. Then, read the paragraph again and highlight any words you do not know. Go back over the highlighted words, and use decoding strategies to determine their meanings in the context of the sermon. What does this sermon tell us about Jesus?
- Play Faith Word of the Week by writing a significant and relevant faith word and placing it in a ballot box at the front of the room. Do this as many times throughout the week as you choose. On Friday, your teacher will open the ballot box, select a word, and allow the person who nominated the word to explain why the word was important that week. Add the word to the Word Wall so everyone can practice saying and using the word.

Fluency, Accuracy, Pacing, Intonation, and Expression; Reading Narrative and Expository Text with

Start with a discussion on the difference between narrative text and expository text. Explain that narrative text tells a story while expository text provides informative. Both use details, vivid verbs, and adjectives to describe the scene. To keep an audience interested when reading texts aloud, use appropriate pacing, intonation, and expression. Using a children's book that is well known—for example, *The Cat in the Hat*—read to the class first in a monotone voice, and have the students tell you what you're doing wrong. Then, read it again in a more natural voice. Read Luke 10:25–37 to the class. Ask whether you have just read narrative

- Choose an expository passage from the Bible (e.g., Genesis 1—the creation account) and one that is primarily narrative (e.g., Matthew 27:11–26—Jesus before Pilate). Listen to a volunteer read each. Determine how the forms are different. Then discuss how the inspired Word uses both forms to express faith. In your own life, how do you share God's Word? Do you use an expository form, explaining who Christ is, or do you use a narrative form, sharing Christ's story with an unbeliever? Journal how you have most recently shared the Good News or how you can share the Good News soon.



INFORMATION BY TOPIC

or expository text. (Narrative) Continue by reading Luke 10:38–39. Ask the same question. (Narrative) Now read a portion of Genesis 5 for the students to categorize. (Expository) Comment that both types of writing (as well as others) are used in God’s Word to tell of His unfolding plan to redeem and save us and all people. (6.1.1.2)

DISCUSSION POINTS/ACTIVITIES

- A parable is a form of storytelling that Jesus used often. Why do you think parables were so effective? Why would telling a story help the listeners to better understand what Jesus was saying? Divide into groups, each choosing a parable from the Gospels. Each group must come up with a way of acting out its parable using appropriate intonation and expression. Then journal what message Jesus is offering to His followers, then as well as now.

Reading Rate Adjusted to Support Comprehension

Most sixth graders readily acknowledge that they need to read a fiction book differently than a social studies textbook. What they may not realize is that one major difference is how fast they read it. The realization of the need to adjust the rate of reading will be important for students to bear in mind as they advance to reading higher level novels as well. Discuss, “Why do we sometimes give in to the temptation to read portions of God’s Word too fast?” In your discussion, affirm ideas such as we may read rapidly because we know the story. We may not think about the account and how God’s Spirit would have us apply that portion of Scripture to our lives today. Comment also that the devil would have us become distracted or unfocused on what we are reading so that we miss the power God’s Spirit desires to give us. Review the Third Commandment in connection with this discussion. (6.1.1.3)

- Read Mark 4:35–41 and 1 Thessalonians 4:1–7. You have one minute to read both selections. When the time is up, recall everything you can about each text. Most likely, you will remember more about the more familiar story of Jesus calming the storm. Discuss why that is the case.
- Choose two different Christian fiction books—one at about a first-grade reading level and one at about an eighth-grade level. Read both to your classmates at varying speeds. Discuss why the lower level one was easier to understand at a fast pace than the upper level one. Review the Gospel of Mark. Many young people prefer reading Mark to the other Gospels because of the direct and straightforward manner in which Mark writes.

Reading Skills, Evaluation, Goal Setting, and Monitoring of

Many schools use computerized reading programs such as Accelerated Reader or Reading Counts to supplement their reading programs. Using these programs, you can assist your students in setting goals and evaluate and monitor their progress. If you do not have such programs, you can still find ways to achieve these same goals. Remember to take time periodically to reflect on the progress realized in achieving the goal. What role do goal setting and evaluating and monitoring progress have in the Christian life? Comment that

- One goal of many Christians is to read through the entire Bible in a year. Set daily and weekly goals for yourself in the reading of God’s Word and books by Christian authors. Work with the others in your class to determine how much of the Bible you will be able to read through during the school year. Plan an appropriate time frame to read the allotted amount and a strategy for achieving this goal. (Maybe you could devote the first ten minutes or the last ten minutes of the day.) Be sure to allow time for any discussion or

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