# Lightning Literature & Composition

## Grade 2

## Teacher's Guide

by

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For Toby and Simon

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# How to Use This Teacher's Guide

Welcome to the **Grade-2 Lightning Literature** program! With this series I hope to instill a love of great literature in children, to improve their writing abilities, and to prepare them for more advanced language arts concepts. The three key components to this series are literature, grammar and mechanics, and composition.

## Literature

The literature in Grade 2 consists of a variety of classic children's books and a few newer ones. The first several weeks are all picture books. The last few weeks are chapter books, most covering more than one week. There are many great books out there, and I'm sure I missed some of your favorites. Nor will your child like all these books equally. With luck, you will find some books and authors you didn't know before but are happy to meet. Of course, don't limit your child's reading this year to these books, but continue to read whatever books they love for pleasure.

Children's abilities vary widely. Some children doing this guide won't be reading yet, or perhaps not reading at the level of all these books, and reading aloud to your child is always permissible in this series, regardless of the grade level or child's reading ability. Some children will have moved beyond these books, but you will find that reading these books with the questions and lessons that go along with them improves your child's literary skills and comprehension.

Books that are covered in one week (for example, all the picture books), you will read twice with your child—every Monday and Wednesday. Tuesday is an optional reading day (and of course you can always reread a book as much as you want.) You can read the book to your child or they can read it to you—this entirely depends on their reading level, their interest, your choice, etc. Since you will be reading the book together a minimum of two times each week, so you could also each take a turn.

You will read the chapter books in sections, Monday through Wednesday or Thursday, rather than rereading sections. This guide also includes four chapters on poetry, and those weeks the poems will also be read three times, Monday through Wednesday.

All readings include comprehension questions listed in the teacher's guide. I provide the answers in the teacher's guide after each question. (Note that my answers are not always complete sentences. I do not require students to always answer in complete sentences when having an oral discussion, as we don't always talk that way.) Depending on your child's comprehension level, you can ask the questions as you read through the text (i.e., immediately

after reading the pertinent page) or altogether at the end of the reading. If your child is reading to themselves, have them complete the reading then do the questions together.

In grade 2, I urge parents to use comprehension questions as a tool to improve reading comprehension rather than a test of it. Children are still learning to attend fully to books, and these questions can help them learn to focus on their reading in a more mature manner. If a child is stressed because they are afraid they will answer the questions wrong, their focus and love of reading will decrease rather than increase.

## Grammar and Mechanics

I have grouped grammar, punctuation, capitalization, parts of speech, sentence diagramming, and even occasional literary concepts under the umbrella term "grammar and mechanics." The student work text contains basic instruction and examples. But I have written some instructions higher than second-grade reading level, so always read the instructions with your child, and be sure they understand them before having them complete the page. If your student struggles with handwriting, it's fine for the student to dictate the answers to you. The teacher's guide contains more detailed instruction when needed and answers to the workbook pages.

Grammar and mechanics are reviewed frequently in the student work text. Sometimes multiple concepts are addressed in one review worksheet. As with all aspects of learning, students vary widely in how easily these concepts will stick with them. Remember that your primary goal is for your child to love language arts. Don't risk impeding that to ensure an understanding of periods or pronouns by the end of the year. I will review these concepts in later grades in this series as I build on them, so there is plenty of time. Often something will click easily with a child only a year later that they simply couldn't understand when it was first introduced.

Correspondingly, unless you have a student who wants grades, I recommend avoiding letter or percentage grades on the workbook pages (or any aspect of this course). Do show your child what they missed on the workbook questions, and review the missed questions together so they understand the problem. But use them as tools to reinforce the concepts and check your child's understanding rather than a judgment on their performance.

If your child is not getting a concept, rather than forcing them to do the workbook pages on their own, work on them together as a teaching tool. Some lessons (for example, the lesson on common and proper nouns) assume a previous exposure to the subject. If your child used the Grade 1 Lightning Literature course, they will have had this exposure. Many other first grade language arts curriculums introduce common and proper nouns. But if your child has not had this exposure, the lesson may be too cursory for them on their own. In that case—or if your child struggled previously with this concept—feel free to work closely with them to provide a more thorough understanding. Throughout this guide I give suggestions for helping a struggling student, for providing additional review of concepts, and for providing extra challenge.

I have tried to create exercises that relate to the reading (by using sentences from the reading, that summarize the reading, or that give additional information about the author) whenever possible. Sometimes, I was unable to rise to this challenge, and have instead opted for the more usual generic sentences.

## Composition

The composition portion of this course should, as with all aspects, be tailored to your child's level. Some children will only be writing (or dictating) a sentence, while others will be ready for a paragraph or a whole story. You may have a child who can dictate a book but barely wants to write a sentence. Come to an agreement about balancing these things—perhaps every third lesson they will write their composition themselves and the others they will dictate. Or you can allow them to dictate everything. This is entirely up to you.

The composition assignments cover a variety of writing aspects—creative writing, essays of all sorts (descriptive, personal, opinion, etc.), research papers, poems, etc. Again, you want to make this an enjoyable experience for your child while also starting to push them towards quality work. Work closely with them on the compositions (unless they specifically ask you not to). At the end, stress what they did well in the composition; then discuss together how it might be improved.

**Composition Book:** The student will need lined composition pages. We have provided masters for 7/8-, 5/8-, and 1/2-inch ruled lines (to be used according to your student's ability) in the back of this Teacher's Guide, which you can copy and collect in a three-ring binder. You may wish to purchase a composition book. If you are able to find a choice of composition books, your child can pick from the selection, making the book more personal. A couple of other options are ordering online and finding a site that has ruled paper of the size you need that is free to print.

## Tailoring This Course to Your Needs

These three things—literature, grammar and mechanics, and composition—are the core of this class. Regardless of your child's ability or interest, I urge you to complete, at least in some fashion, all of these.

The following portions are optional. Although I believe all are valuable and, I have reasons for including them, they are not central to the program. Depending on your child's existing skills, strengths, interests, and your time constraints, you may skip any or all of them. You could also do some on only some weeks.

**Reading Journal Pages:** Pages are in the Student Workbook each week for the student's response to the book. I ask the student to summarize the book ("What this story is about"),

write a one-sentence opinion of the book ("What I think of this story"), and write a favorite line from the book ("My favorite line"). The summary is an excellent skill to develop, and the opinion and favorite line make for a great keepsake.

**Dictionary Pages/Word Collection:** Every Wednesday I ask your child to put five to ten words in their dictionary pages (these are located in the back of the Student Workbook) or their word collection (this is explained in Lesson 1). The aim of this is to increase and reinforce vocabulary. These words can come from their reading for this class, for other classes, outside reading, or their daily life.

**Sentence Puzzles and Extra Diagramming:** Rather than the usual grammar pages, every Wednesday has a sentence puzzle or extra sentence diagramming. These help to improve students' sentence structure.

***Winnie-the-Pooh* and *Just So Stories*:** For the first twenty weeks the literary lesson on Thursday is to read half a chapter of *Winnie-the-Pooh.* I also provide a few questions about the reading each week, including predictive questions for the first halves of the chapters. After that I assign a chapter most weeks from *Just So Stories*. The second book is much more challenging reading than the first—the sentence structure and vocabulary are at a much higher level—but it's valuable to provide students with literature that stretches them.

**Extending the Lesson:** These are meant for the more advanced student, or for when any student is particularly excited by the reading or any of the extension ideas. They allow students to explore a book or its concepts in more depth, and can provide ways to extend the lesson into other areas such as science, history, and art.

## Preparing for the Week

Before the week begins, read the book if you are unfamiliar with it. Read the questions and mark any that you do not want to ask your child. If you are asking your child questions as you read (rather than at the end of the reading), note the page numbers where you wish to ask the questions. (I did not include page numbers because there are different editions of these books, and some are found in compilations.)

If you think a certain grammar aspect may be difficult for your child, consider adding this guide's suggestions. You can also find worksheets in other books or on the web. Mark which optional projects you think would most interest your child or that you think would most reinforce the learning.

Gather any materials you need. The basics for this course rarely require extra materials, but if you plan on doing the lesson extensions you will likely need more. If you plan on reading other books by the same author, preview the books before reading them to your child.

The following are additional notes for each day.

## Monday

### *Literature*

For the picture books (the first 21 weeks of this class) on Mondays you will ask literal and inferential comprehension questions about the reading. Literal questions are those that can be answered with information directly taken from the book. Inferential questions are those that require the child to understand something not directly stated in the text, and they tend to be more difficult.

Because chapter books are only read once, questions pertain to those chapters read on Monday, and can be of any type (literal, inferential, evaluative, or predictive). The types of questions asked about the poems will vary depending on the lesson. More detail on these is in each poetry lesson.

### *Grammar and Mechanics*

On Mondays, work text exercises for grammar and mechanics are usually "fill in the blank," multiple choice, or matching. This gives students a gentle introduction to the new ideas. In some cases a more rudimentary idea is introduced on Monday then built on throughout the week. For example, on Monday I introduce the idea of alphabetizing by the first letter of words, then on Tuesday students learn what to do when words begin with the same letter.

### *Composition*

On Mondays, the assignment is usually to brainstorm a topic for the paper and sometimes subtopics as well. For example, if the assignment is to write a paper about a friend, the student would need to choose which friend to write about (topic) and perhaps three things to say about that friend (subtopics).

## Tuesday

### *Literature*

For the first 21 weeks, on Tuesday you have the choice whether to read the book again or not. Some weeks you may choose to do so and some weeks not, depending on the child's interest in the book. Giving children the option to read or not whenever possible gives them a greater feeling of control, instilling a greater feeling of ownership of their education.

Chapter books are read in portions every Monday through Wednesday until the book is finished. Poems are also read every Monday through Wednesday.

For picture books, today is Narration Day. Have your child retell as much of the book as they can remember to you. (If you are going to read the book again today, do this before reading it again.) Once they have done that, discuss the book together. Chapter books also have a Narration Day the day after the book is finished. There is no Narration Day for poems.

There are two goals to this step. The first is to recall as many details of the book as possible. For each book, the teacher's guide provides details in the following areas: **Story, Character, Setting, External Details, Internal Details, and Conflict.** For chapter books, the *Teacher's Guide* also discusses **Theme.**

Story

**Story** is what happens in the story. This should not include every detail of what happens, just a one- or two-line summary is fine. For example, the story of Cinderella could be summarized as, "A young woman is mistreated by her step-mother and step-sisters because she is more beautiful than they are. But with the help of her fairy godmother she ends up marrying the Prince."

. . . . . .

Character

**Character** includes a description of the main character(s) (physical and personality). Often when a child names some aspect of a character's personality, a terrific next question is, "How do you know the character is _____?" This prompts the child to tell you what detail from the book tells us the character is friendly, funny, smart, etc. This both allows you to better evaluate your child's understanding of the reading and develops the habit in your child of supporting their opinions with evidence from the material (a crucial, life-long reading skill). Also, character sometimes (though not always in books at this level) includes how the character is different at the end of the story than they were at the beginning.

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Setting

**Setting** is where and when the story happens.

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External Details

**External Details** are any pertinent details of the story that aren't captured in any of the other summaries. For example, other characters the main character meets. This may also include cause-effect and order of events.

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Internal Details

**Internal Details** are emotions and other feelings the main character experiences that aren't permanent parts of their character. For example, the character might be characterized as "brave" when describing their character, but they may have been afraid during one part of the story.

**Conflict** includes telling what the character wants, what keeps the character from getting it, and what the character does to overcome the obstacle.

Conflict

. . . . . .

Theme is the author's message, the underlying meaning or moral of the story.

Theme

At this point, the goal is **NOT** to introduce various technical terms to your child (*conflict, setting,* etc.). If your child is ready for it, and you want to drop those words casually in your discussions, that's fine. But the goal with this section is simply to start directing your child's attention towards these aspects of the books they're reading. Here's how a dialogue about *Max's Words* might profitably proceed:

Parent: Pretend I've never read the book and tell me the story.

Child: It's about a boy who collects words.

Parent: Why does he collect words?

Child: His brothers collect coins and stamps, but they won't share with him.

Parent: Does he like doing it?

Child: Yes.

Parent: How do you know?

Child: He collects a lot of them and puts them into groups. And he has fun making sentences.

Parent: What groups does he make?

Child: He has a group of small words and a group of words that make him happy.

[Even though this answer is incomplete, don't press it at this point. This is an excellent start, and it's better to reward this response with continuing the conversation rather than make the child feel that it was a failure by saying, "I think there were more."]

Parent: You said he makes sentences too. Does he do anything with those sentences?

Child: He makes a story.

Parent: Does he tell the story to anyone?

Child: His brothers see him doing it, and they like it so much that they help him.

The conversation would go on from here, but even this small example shows how easy it is to elicit information on all the categories mentioned without turning things into a quiz. The more practice a child has at conversing about books on this level, the more they will notice these details when reading and eventually bring them forth on their own when asked about a book.

The second goal for this step is almost the opposite—to come up with a brief summary of the book. But, this summary should be a strong one that addresses all the central questions (Who, What, Where, When, Why, How) without extraneous detail.

Our child's first summary (It's about a boy who collects words) is insufficient. Here is a better summary: "A boy named Max discovers how fun words are when he begins a collection of them because his brothers won't share their collections." There is no one right summary for any book, just work with your child toward the goal of a summary that addresses the central questions. (Not all questions will apply to all stories. For example, "Where" is not a pertinent question to *Max's Words.*) A brief summary of a book—even simple books like these—is a difficult skill. Do not expect your child to master it this year. Just make a habit of modeling it and shaping their summaries towards this end.

## *Grammar and Mechanics*

On Tuesdays, grammar and mechanics may introduce a further step of a topic (for example, regular plurals might be introduced on Monday and one set of irregular plurals on Tuesday). Some weeks, the same topic is covered on Tuesday but with more challenging exercises like editing. For example, if the week's topic is capitalizing proper nouns, the assignment might be to find all the proper nouns in the passage and capitalize them.

## *Composition*

Tuesday's composition assignment is usually further brainstorming, ordering of ideas, or both. In some cases, Tuesdays are used for doing research or conducting an interview.

## *Reading Journal*

Turn to the appropriate pages in the Student Workbook for the week's book. Your child will write or dictate three sentences: one sentence summarizing the story ("What this story is about"), a second sentence expressing something they felt about the book ("What I think of this story") and finally they choose their favorite sentence from the book to copy. Any personal response is fine (they liked or didn't like it, it made them happy or sad, it made them laugh, their favorite part was such-and-such, they would love to meet a certain character, etc.). You can discuss the best way to form the sentence before writing it down, if you wish. Again, this reading journal is optional, and if you prefer that your student only focus on the main composition, that's fine.

I've assigned this earlier in the week, trying to keep time free later in the week for the composition work. You could have your student do it any time during the week. For chapter-length books, wait until the book is completed.

## Wednesday

### *Literature*

For the first 21 weeks, today you read the book with your child again (whether or not you read it together yesterday) and ask additional comprehension questions. Again, whether you read the book aloud or your child does is up to you.

Today's questions, for the picture books, are more inferential questions and evaluative questions. Evaluative questions ask the child to give opinions. Sometimes these are opinions about things that happen in the story, the characters, etc. Other times they ask the child to offer opinions from their own lives that relate to something in the book. For example, if a character is worried about something, the question might ask the student if they have ever worried about something and how it ended up. Because these ask for your child's opinions, answers aren't always given in this Teacher's Guide for these questions.

**Please preview the evaluative questions, and don't ask any that might upset your child (or that just wouldn't apply to your lives).** Every child is different, has had different experiences, etc., and a question that is innocuous to one child can be distressing to another. As there is no way for me (or any writer) to predict for this, you will have to.

### *Grammar and Mechanics*

On Wednesday, students take a break from the weekly grammar topic. Instead, they complete either a sentence puzzle or additional sentence diagramming. Both help develop sentence structure skills, but they are optional.

### *Composition*

Most weeks, students will write their rough draft today. This should not be written in the composition book, but just on any paper you have handy. As always, you decide whether your child handwrites, types, or dictates to you. You know what they're ready for, and what is an appropriate challenge.

## Thursday

### *Literature*

For the first twenty weeks, the literature assignment for each Thursday is half a chapter of *Winnie-the-Pooh.* Each time the first half of a chapter is assigned, I give some predictive questions to ask. (Predictive questions are also included in the questions for the chapter books.) After that, I assign chapters from *Just So Stories* by Rudyard Kipling. (There are actually 13 stories, but most editions do not publish the last one.) These books are optional, but they are a valuable addition to any child's classic literature experience.

### *Grammar*

Today's grammar sometimes adds another aspect to the week's topic or provides greater challenge by assigning composition using the grammar learned. Some weeks one or more days review grammar from previous lessons.

### *Composition*

Today your child writes the final draft of their paper (unless something else is specifically assigned). This final draft is written in the composition book. Feel free to also add illustrations. If there is a composition your child is particularly fond of, you can also do something special with it (frame it, put covers on it to make it into its own book, etc.).

## Friday

Fridays are free days. You can take a day off language arts, use the day to complete any work from earlier that was missed, add extra projects—whatever you want. This can vary from week to week.

### *Extending the Lesson*

At any time during the week, including weekends, you can extend the lesson. You might choose to extend some lessons and not others, depending on your child's interest in the material. I give some suggestions for extending the lesson at the end of each week, but you don't have to wait until the end of the week to do extra projects. Some of these extra projects relate to languages arts while others extend into other subjects (history, geography, science, art, etc.).

## A Note About Sentence Diagramming

Once sentence diagramming was always taught in schools; now it is rare. While I don't believe the old ways are always better, in this case I think students have lost something. While word choice, paragraph formation, and logical organization are vital to good writing (as are many other skills), the central unit of written language is the sentence.

Sentence diagramming is not merely drawing lines and repositioning words. It helps teach students the function of words in a sentence. For example, although we give adjectives, articles, and possessive pronouns different names, they are often diagrammed in the same manner because they often function in the same manner—to modify a noun. In later years, students can apply sentence diagramming to sentences of authors they admire for a deeper look at why those sentences work—why they inform us, delight us, inspire us.

Diagramming can be particularly helpful to students who are visual learners or those who enjoy puzzles. Try the diagramming this year—you might be surprised at how your student does. But if they struggle with it excessively and it continues to frustrate rather than illuminate, feel free to drop those questions, even on the non-optional grammar pages.