

# Language Arts

## *For the Gifted Student*

BY ALYCE PUDEWELL

**A** young man who shows a natural ability in baseball gets encouragement from the daily routines of school and from family and friends. He is admired and sought after by team members. He is likely to receive gifts of quality mitts, bats, and balls from proud parents. But the critical factor in developing his talent is

how much time he spends practicing. Studying a great ballplayer as his model and playing ball many hours every week for years helps the aspiring athlete hone natural skills for disciplined performance.

Measuring the performance of an athlete is much easier than measuring the talent of a writer. But the need for role models and practice to hone one's

skills is just as important to a student gifted in language arts and writing. Just as a ballplayer's goal is to play, not to watch other players, so a person gifted in language arts should not be content to read what others write, but rather be driven to produce his or her own writing.

Students gifted in language arts may read easily and seem to compre-

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hend well. However, in order to truly achieve their potential they need the discipline of using higher thinking skills in analyzing literature. The ultimate goal of this hard work is to become a “player.” The same hours of practice over weeks and years that the ballplayer spends also need to be spent by the writer, studying literature and sharpening his or her writing skills.

Often a critical ingredient is missing from the life of a potential writer—encouragement and affirmation by parents, friends, and teachers. Parents sometimes do not understand their child’s need to spend time practicing writing skills.

### **Developing Positive Strategies**

Writing is not often a team sport. It can be lonely. It is sometimes tedious for the teacher to grade. To overcome these obstacles, teachers need to develop positive strategies for their classrooms. Most teachers do not have the time to design special language arts activities for the two or three students in each classroom who are gifted in this area.

However, because gifted students are our future leaders and influencers of thought, their development is critical to the betterment of society. Teachers who want to help them reach their potential will find a number of activities from teacher handbooks available from the local school supply or advertisements in professional journals.

In addition, the Pacific Union Office of Education is developing activities for students gifted in the language arts. Activities will cover kindergarten through 12th grade. TAG activities apply higher-level thinking skills to good literature, and teach students to respond through communication and writing.

In grades K-8, TAG uses the Life Reading Series as a thematic basis, so its activities fit into the language arts curriculum of a typical SDA classroom. The TAG (Talents and Gifts) curriculum is also available in social studies and math.

Teachers will find that TAG efficiently matches literature selections to the content of social studies and science classes, as well as Bible classes. Because of the differences in classrooms, a variety of open-ended TAG activities are given from which students and teachers may choose. Activities also reflect different

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learning styles, interests, and possible gifts in other areas such as the fine arts.

### **Involving Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom**

Gifted students rarely benefit from being pulled out of class, even if they are given different assignments than other students. They benefit from class discussion and interaction, as well as contributing to the knowledge and thinking of their classmates. The TAG activities are designed to accompany regular class

content as substitute assignments for seatwork and homework. The level of learning by the whole class increases as the TAG students creatively contribute in the classroom.

Students who demonstrate mastery of reading and English skills at their own grade level need a challenge to make school exciting for them. Instead of requiring the normal seatwork in reading or English class, ask them to read a literature selection that complements the theme of the lesson. Suggest that your gifted students read the selection for a specific purpose, based on the activity they will do.

In a multigrade classroom, students of different ages can work together on a project, contributing at their own ability level. While other students are doing their seatwork, TAG students can work on their activity with the goal of bringing an interesting and enjoyable product back to the class.

Here is a sampling of activities and projects taken from the Pacific Union TAG curriculum.

### **Grade 2**

The following activity could be used with an appropriate Bible lesson, or an advanced reader such as *Windows of Heaven* [Level 8], Unit 6, “Once There Was.”

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A. Read the story of the Tower of Babel, Genesis 11:1-9, in the International Children's Bible or another easy-reading Bible. Look up the word *ziggurat* in a Bible dictionary to learn what the Tower of Babel looked like.

B. Draw the story in cartoon form using bubbles for the conversation. Include in your drawings

1. a series of frames showing the events of the story,
2. accurate drawings of the tower,
3. dialogue in the bubbles,
4. people trying to talk to each other,
5. the consequences around the world because of what happened at the Tower of Babel.

C. Display the story pictures on the bulletin board for the class.

### Grade 3

The following activity could be used with *Seedtime and Harvest* [Level 9], Book Length Story: "George Washington's Breakfast."

A. Read a book about Paul Revere, such as *America's Paul Revere* by Esther Forbes. H. W. Longfellow wrote a beautiful poem called "Paul Revere's Ride." This poem is called a "ballad." Read and carefully analyze Longfellow's poem.

B. Write a ballad about Revere that

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is different from Longfellow's. Copy the ballad on a poster and illustrate it, or have a friend help you.

C. Ask your teacher to let you read the ballad for the class. Put the poster on the class wall.

### Grade 5

The following project goes nicely with *Miracles and Milestones* [Level 11], Unit 4, "Mystery of Oak Island."

A. Read the first volume of *Anne of Green Gables*. Choose your favorite chapter in which the personalities of Anne and some of her friends are demonstrated. Outline the characteristics of each person.

B. Write a radio play based on the chapter. The play should have a narrator, two or more characters, music, and sound effects. Ask your classmates to help you present your play, either by recording it or doing the play live to your class audience.

C. Perform or record your play for the class. Give your teacher a copy.

### Grade 7

The following project goes well with *Of Morning Stars* (Level 13), Unit 4, "Conductor on the Underground Railroad."

A. Read your choice of a book by or about the following people: Harriet Tubman, Louisa May Alcott, Harriet Beecher Stowe, or Sojourner Truth.

B. Write a list of questions that a talk show host could ask this Civil War activist. Choose a classmate to be the host and interview you. Dress yourself as the activist.

C. With your class as the audience, stage a talk show interview in which you discuss your life. Be sure to discuss any book(s) you may have written. Include in the interview high points from your life and your career.

### Grade 8

This project would fit nicely with two different units in *Who Is My Brother?* [Level 14], Unit 1, "A Generation Away": "Gentleman of Rio en Medio" or Unit 5, "The Faces of Danger": "Lydia Darrah."

A. Research your family history and genealogy.

1. Collect stories from your living relatives.
2. Acquire copies of letters or legal papers that help to explain your family story.
3. Make genealogy charts, a coat of arms, or drawings of family homes.
4. Chart the countries from which your ancestors came. You may wish to research the customs of those countries.

B. Write your family history in the form of a short historical novel. Include dialogue and background of the time and place. Choose two or three characters to describe fully. Show their personalities with dialogue. Relate their decisions made at crossroads of their life. Analyze in the story the

consequences of these decisions.

C. Make your story into at least two books with a cover and illustrations. Donate a copy to the classroom library.

### **Activities to Follow the Study of a Work of Literature**

1. Analyze the main characters of the story with a friend. Write a short essay describing how one of the characters changed from the beginning of the story to the end.

2. Rewrite the ending of the story to bring to life a different kind of person than is portrayed in the story.

3. Keep a diary of a journey you have taken. Write a short story patterned after the book *Little House on the Prairie*. Refer to the book while writing your own book to analyze how characters are developed and scenes described.

4. Write an illustrated ballad about the story.

5. Rewrite the story in the verse

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form of the King James Bible.

6. Write a free-verse poem or ballad using strong adverbs and adjectives to tell a hero's story.

7. Make a chart comparing the character traits of the main people in the story.

8. Write a song with verse reflecting a sad incident in the story.

9. Write the story line for a wordless book.

10. Write the script for and enact,

with friends, a TV drama. Record and play for the class.

Activities and projects can be adjusted to fit the student and the circumstances. However, it is important that the students be accountable for their time and quality and quantity of work. Criteria for performance should be agreed upon before beginning.

It is a challenge to stimulate the development of a gifted child's skills. TAG can help gifted students in language arts classes to practice their skills and become "star athletes" in reading and writing. ✍

*For more information about the Talents and Gifts Program (TAG), request an order form from the Office of Education, Pacific Union Conference, P. O. Box 5005, Westlake Village, CA 91359 U.S.A.*

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