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Introduction

Welcome! This book's instruction is about encomia and invectives—praising virtues and blaming vices. You get to write about people and ideas you love, and people and ideas you hate. You will explore lofty praises, you will savor the humor of a well-phrased insult, and you will feel the sting of a cutting remark.

I don't need a friend who
changes when I change
and who nods when I nod;
my shadow does that much
better.

~ Plutarch

Introduction

Overview

Who is Plutarch?

The Ancient Progymnasmata

Encomia: A Time to Praise

Invective: A Time to Blame

How to Use This Book

Essays

The Plutarch Companion

Reference Works

Introduction

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

Ecclesiastes, Chapter 3

Plutarch

Plutarch was a Roman of the first century AD, a priest of Apollo and a prolific writer. His most famous work is *The Lives*, a collection of mini-biographies of Greeks and Romans from the centuries before his birth. We are indebted to Plutarch for many of these 'lives', which otherwise we might have known almost nothing about. Plutarch wrote evaluative biographies, where he praised virtues and blamed vices in people. He praises that which is good, and blames that which is bad. In short, he writes encomia and invectives. Plutarch also wrote comparisons. His *Parallel Lives* feature a Greek and a Roman and compare the two: two generals, two writers, two statesmen, and so forth.

Progymnasmata

Ancient classical education arose after the conquests of Alexander the Great in the fourth century BC. The Hellenistic monarchy that arose after Alexander's death needed to be unified by a common language—Greek—or it would be impossible to rule the vast territories it stretched over. The ensuing system of "classical education" persisted largely unchanged century after century despite the rise of Rome and later of Christianity and ended only with the rise

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of industrialism, with its need for scientists and engineers rather than literate and rhetorically trained leaders.

Ancient Writing Instruction

Writing instruction was done by the use of a set of exercises, the progymnasmata, developed in the late fourth century BC. Instruction began with short and simple literary selections: fables, narratives, encomia, descriptions, and comparisons. Progymnasmata means pre-rhetorical exercises in composition. The progymnasmata handbooks of four ancient authors are extant: Aelius Theon of Alexandria (late first century AD), Hermogenes of Tarsus (late second century AD), Aphthonius of Antioch (late fourth century AD), and Nicolaus of Myra (fifth century AD).

Aphthonius' Handbook

Aphthonius' progymnasmata are best known because he provided complete samples of all the exercises. His handbook remained in use in European education through the early modern period. In the Classical Writing series we draw on all four authors as sources for our treatment of these exercises.

The progymnasmata are

- A set of rudimentary exercises intended to prepare students of rhetoric for the creation and performance of complete practice orations (*gymnasmata* or declamations). They are a crucial component of classical and renaissance rhetorical pedagogy.
- A series of exercises which introduced students of rhetoric to a variety of techniques and concepts which would be fundamental in more advanced work, and gave them the opportunity to practice separately skills that would have to be combined when doing more advanced exercises and composing real speeches.

The ancient progymnasmata handbooks typically contain fourteen assignments ranked by degree of complexity. You have already studied fable, narrative, maxim, and chreia, which are all concerned with deliberative rhetoric. In this book we are going to examine the progymnasmata of encomium, invective, and comparison.

Encomium

An encomium is a praise of a person. We use encomia to praise God, as well as to praise persons. Encomia writ-

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ten about persons discuss the person's origins, upbringing, education and training, and deeds. You will also praise the person by comparing him or her to someone great while showing that the subject of your encomium is the greatest.

Invective

An invective takes a strong stance against an individual who has behaved shamefully, unethically, immorally, sacrilegiously, or illegally. Invectives are written about obvious wrongs committed by the person in question. In the invective you discuss the person's origins, upbringing, education and training, and deeds. You compare him or her to another bad person, only to end your invective by concluding that the subject of your invective is the worse of the two.

Comparison

A comparison essay is written about two persons. You compare the two to show that one is better than the other, one is worse than the other, or that both are peers in every respect.

The exercises of encomium, invective, and comparison deal with praising virtue and blaming vice. That is what this book is all about—not balanced, objective writing.

Encomia, invectives, and comparisons are what Plutarch wrote in his book, which in modernity is known as Plutarch's *Lives*.

Encomia: A Time to Praise

Humans express themselves via the common medium of language to communicate with each other and exchange information.

Language expresses everything from simple greetings or instructions to lofty contemplations about the meaning of life and the nature of God. We praise God through the act of prayer. Prayer often (though it need not always do so) employs the medium of language to express those praises.

Divine Revelation, likewise, is expressed through the medium of language. The New Testament in the Gospel of St. John states that Divine Logos "became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn 1.14).

Through the Divine Logos, St. John tells us, the eternal truth of God was transmitted to men and expressed in hu-

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man language. The incarnate Logos spoke to man about God by means of words, images, parables, and concepts, that men might in turn praise God. There is no higher praise that man can express than the praise of the Divine.

In this book, we will discuss how to praise the good and blame the bad. We do this through literature and through history.

Literature helps us see deeper, further, and more compassionately, so we will know what to praise and what to blame. The literature and speeches in this book will challenge our thoughts and broaden our perspectives.

My aim with this book is to show you how ancients and moderns praise and blame. You will explore great thoughts in both in Cicero's and Lincoln's letters. You will meet great people deserving of praise and great ideas to marvel over, and you will write praises of things, people, or ideas that you find praiseworthy.

At no point in this text is it my aim convert you to a particular point of view. What you make of what you read is for you to wrestle with, along with your teacher and your classmates.

Invectives: A Time to Blame

Some times we need to blame a person or deplore a concept or idea. You will write invective as you work through this course. Writing invective is a nasty business.

... or is it?

To call the bad, bad, and to call the good, good is a task that requires discernment, to be sure. But ...

Fraud, embezzlement, lying, threats, intimidation, assault, and murder are evil, and as a pastor of mine once told me, it is wrong NOT to call such acts evil.

Yes, we need discernment, and we need to take care not to speak of that of which we have no understanding, but there is a time to deplore evil, as well as a time to praise and hold up that which is good.

Invective can be fun, also. Look at our politicians. Consider the mud they sometimes sling at each other. It can be amusing and entertaining to read, if we choose to view

Introduction

it as such. Invective is as old as humanity itself. Modern politics is not unique in the mud-slinging department. You will study insults and mudslinging from many centuries in this book.

There is a time and a place in our world for words, even critical, harsh words and brutal debate. Civilization, after all, exists because men often decide to argue rather than to come to blows over issues. Consider that, the next time you want to despair over modern political debates. The sound-byte length insults that the politicians level at each other, lame as they might be, are greatly to be preferred over civil war and unrest, as a means for establishing who has power in your country.

How to Use This Book

The best way to get started with this book is through the Plutarch Companion, which schedules all exercises and readings from this book into a 14-week semester.

Overview of Book

This book is divided into four chapters and an appendix.

Chapter 1 discusses encomia

Chapter 2 discusses invectives.

Chapter 3 discusses comparisons.

Chapter 4 discusses letters and speeches.

The appendix contains a review of basic skills from our previous books. In addition, the appendix contains examples of each kind of essay you will write during this course.

Essay Writing

Essay steps are scheduled in the daily lessons, one step per day. You will be writing essays as you complete the lessons. Editing tables are in the appendix and in the Plutarch Companion. For an overview of our essay writing, here are the four steps to our essay writing routines.

Step I. Plan and Outline

1. Decode the assignment.
2. Formulate the thesis statement.

Classical Writing - Plutarch - Preview

Introduction

3. Analyze the audience.
4. Support the thesis statement.
5. Write the outline.

Step II. Draft

Take the outline, and write the essay from it.

Step III. Macro-edit and Step IV. Micro-edit

We always macro-edit first and micro-edit second. Macro-editing is concerned with the content of your essay, something you want to fix before you micro-edit. It is not helpful to correct phrases and words before the the content is correct.

Note to Teacher

In this volume, your student will write six essays. We encourage you to give your students additional practice writing encomia, invectives, and comparisons pertaining to their other studies or areas of interest.

Plutarch Companion

The Plutarch Companion contains a one-page overview of the assignments in this book, as well as the models and many of the tables from this book. It also contains answers to some of the exercises. The Companion can be purchased in paperback or downloaded as a pdf. You can complete Plutarch without the Companion; however, the Companion gives you a handy checklist for your work and easy access to copies of the models and tables in the core book, which you can print and use for your analysis.

Reference Works

We recommend the following reference works while working through this book.

- A grammar and diagramming reference
- A dictionary (preferably one that lists word etymology and Greek and Latin roots)
- A thesaurus

This chapter discusses comparisons—comparisons of words, comparisons of paragraphs, and comparison essays. The progymnasma comparison is an entire essay comparing two persons or two things.

2 is not equal to 3, not even
for large values of 2.

Gabel's Law

Chapter 3 - Facts

Comparison

Who

We humans make comparisons all the time.

What

We compare products for sale, political candidates, movies to watch, books to read, people to associate with, and so forth.

When

Week 8 - Figures and Comparison

Week 9 - Comparisons

Week 10 - Comparison Essays

Where

This chapter explores comparisons through ancient as well as modern models.

How

When comparing two things, we list, subject by subject, the attributes of each and argue for the superior one by comparing our lists.

Why

We all need the skills of comparing and evaluating.

Pre-lesson

Silas Marner



Goal

Research the life of George Eliot (the pseudonym of Mary Anne Evans), and read her novel *Silas Marner*.

Introduction

Note - The readings proposed in this book are optional.

We chose George Eliot's writings for this chapter, since her skill in figures of speech and comparisons is unparalleled in English literature.

Here is a quick plot summary of *Silas Marner*: At the beginning of the novel the main character Silas Marner is falsely accused of stealing money from his church by his best friend. His best friend takes, not only the money, but Silas' fiancée. Silas loses his faith in both man and in God. He leaves his home town and moves south to a village far away. In this new place Silas becomes a miserly recluse, trusting no one and simply living to hoard the money he makes from weaving. One night, years later, Silas finds an abandoned child on his doorstep. He decides to keep the child, and she changes his life completely.

The novel centers around Silas and the girl Eppie, around Silas' lack of trust, and around the girl's mysterious origins which are revealed as the novel unfolds. *Silas Marner* is a novel of love, forgiveness, and redemption in the face of hopelessness and betrayal.

Exercise

- Research the background of George Eliot and *Silas Marner*.
- You need to read the twenty-one chapters of *Silas Marner* over the next six weeks. One option is to read it on-line from the link listed below:

www.gutenberg.org/files/550/550-h/550-h.htm

Week 8 Overview

Figures and Comparison

Objectives

1. Understand the difference between a comparison and a figure of speech.
2. Divide figures of speech into tropes and schemes.
3. Study antithesis.

Model

George Eliot *Silas Marner*, Chapter II

Vocabulary

Figures
Comparisons
Tropes
Schemes
Antithesis
Euphemism

1. He seemed to weave, like the spider, from pure impulse, without reflection. 2. Every man's work, pursued steadily, tends in this way to become an end in itself, and so to bridge over the loveless chasms of his life. 3. Silas' hand satisfied itself with throwing the shuttle, and his eye with seeing the little squares in the cloth complete themselves under his effort. 4. Then there were the calls of hunger; and Silas, in his solitude, had to provide his own breakfast, dinner, and supper, to fetch his own water from the well, and put his own kettle on the fire; and all these immediate promptings helped, along with the weaving, to reduce his life to the unquestioning activity of a spinning insect. 5. He hated the thought of the past; there was nothing that called out his love and fellowship toward the strangers he had come amongst; and the future was all dark, for there was no Unseen Love that cared for him. 6. Thought was arrested by utter bewilderment, now its old narrow pathway was closed, and affection seemed to have died under the bruise that had fallen on its keenest nerves. 7. But at last Mrs. Osgood's table-linen was finished, and Silas was paid in gold. 8. His earnings in his native town, where he worked for a wholesale dealer, had been after a lower rate; he had been paid weekly, and of his weekly earnings a large proportion had gone to objects of piety and charity. 9. Now, for the first time in his life, he had five bright guineas put into his hand; no man expected a share of them, and he loved no man that he should offer him a share. 10. But what were the guineas to him who saw no vista beyond countless days of weaving?

~ George Eliot

Lesson 3.1

Comparisons

Goal

Learn the terminology for the different types of comparisons you can write.

Introduction

Comparison is a powerful rhetorical tool. We have taught many types of comparison in previous books in the Classical Writing series, and we are going to review those in this lesson. Comparison is also a progymnasma in its own right. We will present this progymnasma at the end of this chapter.

Different Levels of Comparison

Comparison can occur at the levels of

- Words, phrases, and clauses
- Sentences
- Paragraphs
- Essays

Words, Phrases, and Clauses

Figures of speech are frequently comparisons. In similes, metaphors, metonymy, and synecdoche, you describe the word or phrase under consideration by comparing some aspect of it to something else with a similar aspect. For example when Robert Burns wanted to express his love, he penned the immortal

My love is like a red, red rose

His subject is love. He wants to express what his love is like, and he compares his love to a 'red, red rose'. That is not particularly concrete or precise. It is a picture of how he sees his love. It is to be felt and imagined, not quantified scientifically. What he is saying is that his love is beautiful the way a rose is beautiful.

In other comparisons, such as antithesis, two seemingly contradictory ideas are compared and held in tension, as we shall see in a later lesson.

Conjunctions

This passage is not designed to be an exhaustive review of conjunctions. For that, consult your grammar book.

Conjunctions can be used to compare words or whole phrases or sentences: *although*, *but*, *however*, *on the contrary*, *in spite of*, and so forth.

Personally I'm always ready to learn,
although I do not always like being taught.
~ Sir Winston Churchill

To err is human,
but to really foul things up requires a computer.
~ Farmers' Almanac

However often you may have done them a favour,
if you once refuse they forget everything *except* your refusal.
~ Pliny the Younger

Los Angeles, it should be understood, is not a mere city. *On the contrary*, it is, and has been since 1888, a commodity; something to be advertised and sold to the people of the United States like automobiles, cigarettes and mouth wash.
~ Morrow Mayo

The greatest happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved—loved for ourselves, *or rather*, loved in spite of ourselves.
~ Victor Hugo

If you would persuade, you must appeal to interest *rather than* intellect.
~ Benjamin Franklin

Censorship, like charity, should begin at home, *but unlike* charity, it should end there.
~ Clare Boothe Luce

Self-respect: the secure feeling that no one, *as yet*, is suspicious.
~ H. L. Mencken

Simile

When you compare two clauses, phrases, or words in a sentence, you may either comment on their similarities, on their differences, or on how they are equal. Consider this comparison:

Duct tape is like the Force.
It has a light side, a dark side,
and it holds the universe together ...
~ Carl Zwanzig

This comparison makes use of the phrase 'is like' to compare two things. The comparison tells us immediately that duct tape is not 'the Force', it is merely LIKE the Force in three aspects: a light side, a dark side, and its power for holding the universe together.

Sentence Level

Often sentences involving comparison use a form of the verb 'to be' to link the predicate to the subject. When we compare two things, we are saying that one thing is related to another thing in one of these three basic ways. It is

1. greater than the other thing.
2. less than the other thing.
- or
3. equal to the other thing.

Here are some examples.

1. Greater than the other

Beneath the rule of men entirely great,
The pen is mightier than the sword.
~ Edward Bulwer-Lytton

2. Not as great as the other

I don't know half of you
half as well as I should like;
and I like less than half of you
half as well as you deserve.
~ J. R. R. Tolkien

3. Equal to the other

Do not pray for easy lives.
Pray to be stronger men.
Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers.
Pray for powers equal to your tasks.
Then the doing of your work shall be no miracle,
but you shall be the miracle.
~ Phillips Brooks

These are the basic relationships of comparison. The steps above are not exhaustive in terms of making comparisons. You can also compare time relationships: 'one event was later than another event', or 'earlier than', or 'at the same time as'. You can also compare likelihoods: 'this event is more likely to have happened than this other event', or 'less likely', etc.

Paragraph Level

In paragraph writing, the type of comparison that is most often used is analogy. The logic in analogy is that if two things are similar in one respect, they are likely to be similar in a second respect also. This is far from an iron-clad proof and must be assigned merely to the probable or plausible.

For just as those who work the land laboriously sow the seed in the earth and gather the crops with greater joy, in the same way those who strive for education by their toil acquire the subsequent renown.

~ Aphthonius

Here sowing seed in the earth is being compared to sowing seeds of knowledge and understanding in the mind in order to get educated. Both require work, and both result in rewards which can be reaped.

For a modern example, consider the following comparison.

In your statement you assert that our actions, even though peaceful, must be condemned because they precipitate violence. But is this a logical assertion? Isn't this like condemning a robbed man because his possession of money precipitated the evil act of robbery? Isn't this like condemning Socrates because his unswerving commitment to truth and his philosophical inquiries precipitated the act by the misguided populace in which they made him drink hemlock? Isn't this like condemning Jesus because his unique God-consciousness and never-ceasing devotion to God's will precipitated the evil act of crucifixion? We must come to see that, as the federal courts have consistently affirmed, it is wrong to urge an individual to cease his efforts to gain his basic constitutional rights because the quest may precipitate violence. Society must protect the robbed and punish the robber.

~ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*

Essay Level

Comparison is a progymnasma in its own right. In a comparison essay you compare two entities (persons, things, ideas, or events). These two entities may be equals, or one may be better, bigger, greater, or more virtuous than the other with regard to one or more features that they have in common.

A comparison essay compares the two entities for similarities or differences in terms of origins, upbringing/development, and deeds.

Classical Writing - Plutarch - Preview

One example of such comparisons is found in Plutarch's *Lives*, where he writes essays comparing the lives of two persons, usually a Greek hero and a Roman hero, whose vocations have been similar.

In modern essays, you may also be asked to compare and contrast two things, ideas, persons, or events. You must show your readers which one is superior and which is inferior. Here are topics for the comparison essay you will be asked to write later in this chapter.

- Compare the three fathers in *Silas Marner*: the squire, the squire's son, and Silas Marner. What does this examination of their roles reveal to us about the 19th century, and has it any relevance to us today?
- Compare one of the generals from Plutarch's *Lives* with a modern general. For example, Caesar with Napoleon, Alexander the Great with Adolph Hitler, or Alcibiades with George S. Patton.
- Compare two contemporaries in Plutarch's *Lives*, such as Mark Antony and Caesar, Alcibiades and Pericles, or Demosthenes and Philip II. Which one does Plutarch write more favorably about, and why?
- Compare and contrast Tom's three owners in the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—Shelby, St. Clare, and Legree. How are they alike? How are they different?
- By current standards, Harriet Beecher Stowe's portrayal of black people in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is seen as racist. Compare and contrast how understandings about the differences and similarities between the races have changed since the eighteenth century.
- Compare Mrs. Bennett and Mrs. Catherine DeBourgh from *Pride and Prejudice*. Explain how money and rank tend to excuse rude behavior in the eyes of society.
- Compare Charlotte Lucas' and Elizabeth Bennett's attitudes towards marriage.

Example

The model we use for this example is written below. Read through it and note what two concepts are compared in the passage.

From *Silas Marner*, Chapter XII

1. This journey on New Year's Eve was a premeditated act of vengeance which she had kept in her heart ever since Godfrey, in a fit of passion, had told her he would sooner die than acknowledge her as his wife.

2. There would be a great party at the Red House on New Year's Eve, she knew: her husband would be smiling and smiled upon, hiding her existence in the darkest corner of his heart. 3. But she would mar his pleasure: she would go in her dingy rags, with her faded face, once as handsome as the best, with her little child that had its father's hair and eyes, and disclose herself to the Squire as his eldest son's wife. 4. It is seldom that the miserable can help regarding their misery as a wrong inflicted by those who are less miserable. 5. Molly knew that the cause of her dingy rags was not her husband's neglect, but the demon Opium to whom she was enslaved, body and soul, except in the lingering mother's tenderness that refused to give him her hungry child. 6. She knew this well; and yet, in the moments of wretched unbenumbed consciousness, the sense of her want and degradation transformed itself continually into bitterness towards Godfrey. 7. He was well off; and if she had her rights she would be well off too. 8. The belief that he repented his marriage, and suffered from it, only aggravated her vindictiveness. 9. Just and self-reproving thoughts do not come to us too thickly, even in the purest air, and with the best lessons of heaven and earth; how should those white-winged delicate messengers make their way to Molly's poisoned chamber, inhabited by no higher memories than those of a barmaid's paradise of pink ribbons and gentlemen's jokes?

~ George Eliot

1. Note what the subject in the passage is being compared to, and why.

This passage compares Molly's rags and her misery to her husband's rich life, his smiling friends and his party. The image of this desperate, poor, angry woman walking towards