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# From the Founder

Few things excite me more than picturing homes and schools filled with children and teachers experiencing books in the ways we will explore in this literature guide. Literature has forever been a cornerstone of culture and education.

Reading introduces us to new people, places, and ideas. It informs us and enables us to learn from past mistakes and successes. It engages our imagination and last but certainly not least, reading entertains us!

Reading is a worthwhile task for everyone, but many take this skill for granted and rarely take advantage of all the benefits. This literature guide explores all the benefits of reading, and by the end, I hope you feel inspired to combine reading with writing to bravely educate the next generation of thinkers.

As a homeschool mom of four, I get it. The challenges are real. But so are the rewards. I humbly ask you to strip away the oppressive expectations placed on you by culture, by your friends, by your family . . . even by yourself. I want you to know that these years of pouring into your children's lives do not last forever. Make the most of the season.

Trust me: You do not need a comprehensive curriculum guide. You can do this. If you read this guide slowly and carefully, you will gain practical strategies that will equip you to enjoy learning from the rich content of each great book you and your children read.

I would love to hear from you. I want to hear how much fun you have as you study great books. I want to see samples of your children's paragraphs and essays, and I want to see pictures of their enrichment projects. If you feel frustrated along the way, reach out. My team will help you work through your challenges and provide some advice to keep you moving forward. Join The Write Journey Community by following us on social media platforms where we can discuss the journey and share ideas. And, of course, check out our website and sign up for our newsletter so you don't miss any of our upcoming products and services made with you and your family in mind.

I pray you enjoy the journey.



Kris Cordell  
Founder & Owner

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# Why Blend Reading & Writing

As children learn to read slowly, they learn to annotate and reflect on what they read.

Many people read for pleasure, to discover new people and places, and to find out how the story will end. When reading for fun, we usually read quickly. Our curiosity is piqued, and we want to find out what happens next. Of course, there is nothing wrong with this type of quick reading unless it is the only type of reading in which a person, especially a child, engages.



Would you agree that many people emphasize “quick” reading over “quality” reading? While there is a proper place for reading quickly, this guide focuses on reading slowly. Surprisingly, reading slowly is a skill that is learned and practiced. Reading slowly does not simply mean reading the words more slowly; it means learning to think as we read. The primary purpose of integrating reading and writing is to engage our thoughts and minds.

While children find reading for entertainment, fun, and even beneficial, they must learn to read in ways that are not simply entertainment. Even reading to gain information is ultimately not the highest, most challenging type of reading. Anyone striving to improve their mind must read to think: to ponder, analyze, evaluate, understand, question, etc. Not surprisingly, this analytical type of reading lends itself to responding in writing.

As children learn to read slowly, they learn to annotate and reflect on what they read. Their reflections will become a type of conversation with the author: as the author expresses their thoughts and ideas in a story or document, the reader responds—sometimes agreeing, sometimes disagreeing, sometimes simply wondering—but hopefully, always thinking and responding.

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# How to Blend Literature & Writing

There are many fun ways to integrate literature with writing. Let's explore a few of those ways.

## Use Great Literature As Study Books

Quality literature makes excellent "study books." Like the Velveteen Rabbit, books will become worn out as readers "digest" them. Children as young as first grade can study (not simply read) three to four chapter books each school year, spending eight to ten weeks on each book.

Of course, children will likely read more books throughout the school year, but they should be expected to really study a few quality books each school year, slowing down their reading as they read with engaged and questioning minds.

Search for quality books with some of the following elements:

- Strong character development and characters that have moral character
- Appropriate yet challenging vocabulary words

- Engaging action and conflicts
- Meaningful, age-appropriate themes
- Quality literary devices including similes, metaphors, personification, idioms, foreshadowing, etc.
- Complex sentence structure, including advanced punctuation
- Award-winning books often supply these elements



"In the case of good books the point is not to see how many of them you can get through but how many can get through to you."

*Mortimer Adler*

## Create Engaging, Instructive Essay Prompts

Providing engaging essay prompts is one of the greatest benefits to blending literature with writing. Few assignments are duller and more tedious than writing a composition simply to complete an assignment! Writing about random topics does not engage a child's mind and imagination like writing about a story they are reading.

Writing essays based on literature develops critical thinking as children process and analyze what they read. They learn to draw conclusions from the literature and express those ideas as they write essays.

Many children write grammatically correct sentences; some even write stylistically engaging sentences. But without solid critical thinking, they are writing little more than fluff. If you desire to develop children who can think deeply and communicate effectively, blending great literature and writing is the key.

Many literature-based writing prompts include the word “why” somewhere in the prompt. “Why” indicates critical thinking, which requires conclusions based on evidence. This is a complex type of writing, so let's begin giving children opportunities to learn how to write short literature-based compositions at a young age.

Elementary-age children will benefit from writing one composition every week. In contrast, older children writing more lengthy, complex compositions will likely write one piece every two to three weeks. Refer to the *TWJ Writing Foundations Handbook* for detailed instructions on how to teach your children proper writing steps and strategies.



See Appendix for additional literature-based writing prompts.



*Remember to engage in group discussions about the book to help children process the information they are reading and to help them learn from each other. They may have some generalized ideas after reading, but many will need help articulating specific, clear ideas with supporting evidence before writing their essays. Discussion is a wonderful opportunity for collaboration and sharing of ideas.*

## Getting Started

Once you identify the book you will study with your children, try these suggestions to blend literature and writing.

### Reading

Have your child read out loud, so the child learns new words and hears proper sentence structure. Even your older children may need to read aloud for a while to assess how accurately they are reading.

### Vocabulary

Ask your children the meaning of new words and allow them to articulate their own definitions (verbally or in writing). Older students may create a chart of vocabulary words, and you may choose to use these words for your child's spelling list.

### Comprehension

Ask comprehension questions, such as “Who said...”, “Who did...”, and “When?” Comprehension questions have a right or wrong answer and determine if children are reading well, recalling details, and understanding the basic plot. Your children may write down the answers to comprehension questions or respond verbally.

### Critical Thinking

“Why?” is the magic word when developing critical thinking. There is no right or wrong answer; we want children to articulate “why” they think, believe, or feel something. Responses should use evidence from the story as support. Allow children to express their ideas and opinions without being corrected or lectured. These critical thinking questions can easily become writing prompts.



*Do not attempt to tackle all these suggestions on the first day or week. Do a few things, then add more at the pace that provides enjoyment and success for you and your child.*

## Chart Topic Examples

<b>Page #</b>	Fact	Opinion
<b>Page #</b>	Vocabulary Word	Definition
<b>Page #</b>	Character at Beginning	Character Changes
<b>Page #</b>	Problem	Possible Solution
<b>Page #</b>	Cause	Effect
<b>Page #</b>	Literary Devices <i>(simile, metaphor, idiom, foreshadowing, etc.)</i>	Sentence
<b>Page #</b>	Dialogue (character)	Insight
<b>Page #</b>	Your Own Idea	Your Own Idea