

The Well-Prepared Middle School Student

How to Get Ready for the High School Years

Susan Wise Bauer

Three areas of preparation:

Academic

Practical

Personal

Looking ahead...

The student must fulfill a number of minimum credits in order to graduate from high school. Traditionally, one credit of high school equals 120 hours of class work, or 160 45-minute periods. Typically, twenty credits are required for graduation:

Language Arts	4
Mathematics	2
Science	2
American History	1
American Government	1
Physical Education	2
Electives	8

A college preparation course is more extensive,
typically requiring the following:

Language Arts	4
Mathematics	3-4
Foreign Language	2-4
World History	1
American History	1
American Government	1
Science	3-4
Physical Education	2
Electives	4-8

Side by side comparison

Language Arts	4
Mathematics	2
Science	2
American History	1
American Government	1
Physical Education	2
Electives	8

Language Arts	4
Mathematics	3-4
Science	3-4
American History	1
American Government	1
World History	1
Physical Education	2
Foreign Language	2-4
Electives	4-8

Language Arts

1. Assign regular “real book” reading, moving up to early high school level of difficulty by eighth grade.

Middle grade difficulty:

Rosemary Sutcliff, *The Lantern Bearers*
Esther Forbes, *Johnny Tremain*
Elizabeth George Speare, *The Sign of the Beaver*
Fred Gipson, *Old Yeller*
Susan Cooper, *The Dark Is Rising*

High school difficulty:

Shakespeare
Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*
Charles Dickens
Thomas Hardy
F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

2. Do grammar every year so that it can take a back seat in high school.

3. Teach outlining and diagramming so that they can become tools during the high school year.

Purposes of Diagramming
Understanding the logic of sentences
Developing a method of self-check

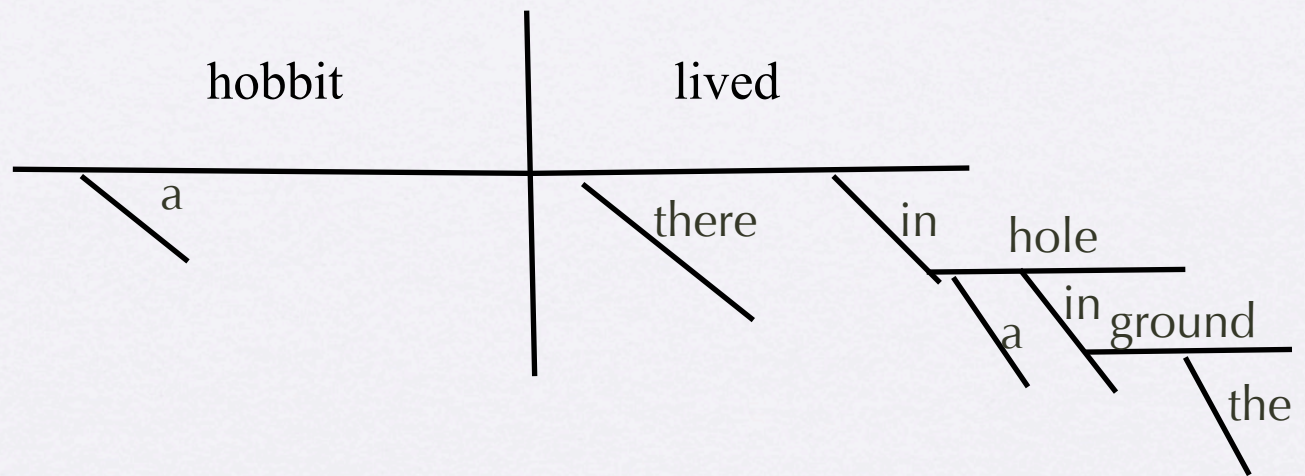
GOOD SENTENCE

In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit.

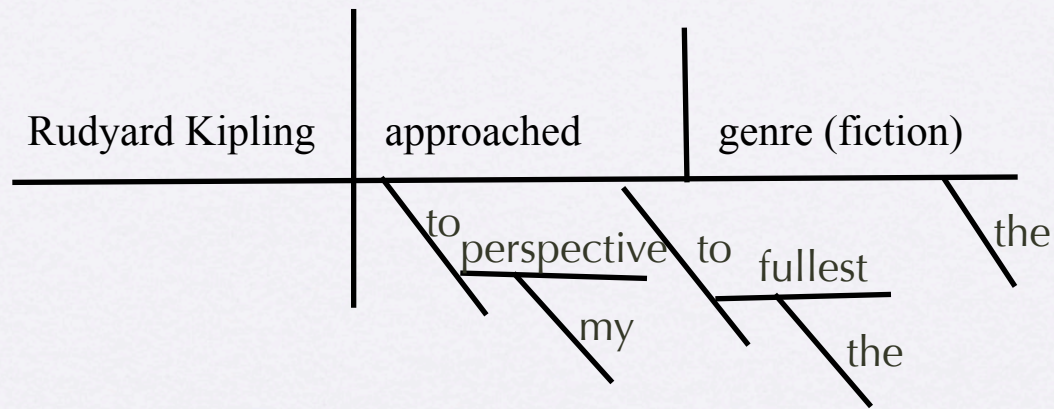
BAD SENTENCE

To my perspective Rudyard Kipling approached the genre
fiction to its fullest.

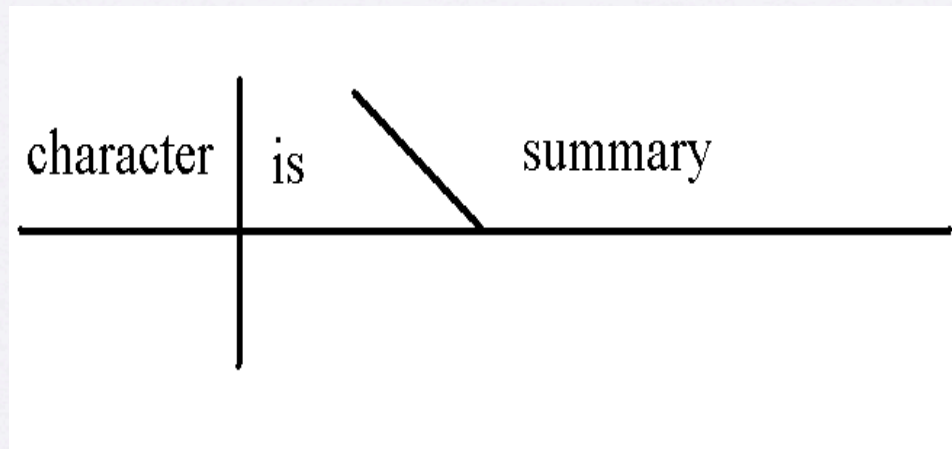
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Therefore, the character of Irene is a summary of women of the time.



4. Begin to talk about books with the student

Who is this book about? (central character[s])

What do the central characters want?

What keeps them/him/her from getting it?

How do they/him/her get what they want?

Do they have an enemy or enemies? Is there a villain?

What does the villain want?

What do you think is the most important event in the story?

What leads up to this event?

How are the characters different after this event?

Pick out the most important event in each chapter.

How many different stories does the writer tell?

Mathematics

1. Schedule pre-algebra NO LATER than ninth grade.
Earlier is better.

9th	Pre-algebra
10th	Algebra I
11th	Geometry
12th	Algebra II

2. Make sure the student begins to do some “real life” math problems.

Figuring out the family’s grocery budget for a week (or a month); finding the best buys at the grocery store

Figuring out expenses and profits for a kid-run home business — grass-cutting, pet-tending, babysitting, baking

Calculating the area of a room, a wall, or the entire house for wallpapering, carpeting, or another home project

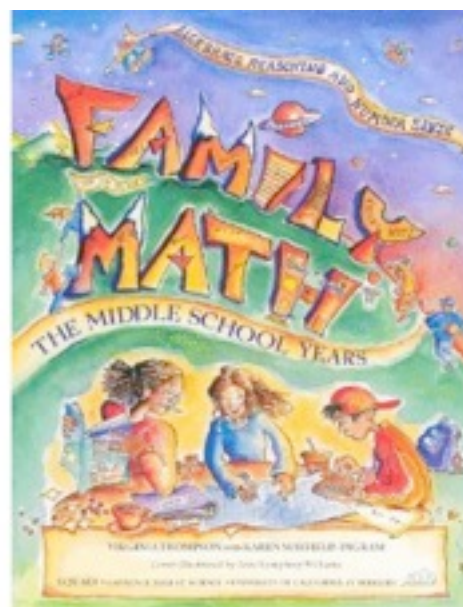
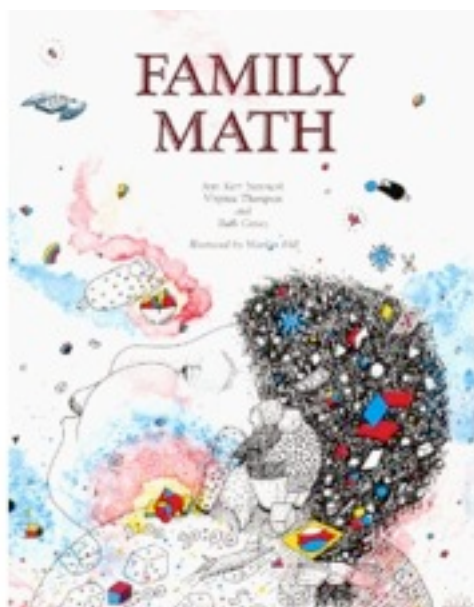
Figuring out the actual cost of driving the car to and from a special event

Figuring out how much a restaurant meal would cost if cooked at home

Calculating the cost in work-hours of movie tickets, concert passes, or other types of entertainment

Altering a recipe so that it serves a different number of people — reducing a 6-person dish to serve 2, or (more complicated) rewriting a 3-person recipe to serve 9 or 11

Working out the itinerary for a family trip, complete with routes, timetables, and scheduled stops



Family Math, by Jean Kerr Stenmark, Virginia Thompson, and Ruth Cossey (Lawrence Hall of Science, 1986)

Family Math: The Middle School Years, Algebraic Reasoning and Number Sense, by Virginia Thompson and Karen Mayfield Ingram, 3rd ed. (Lawrence Hall of Science, 1998)

Science

1. Understand the scientific method
2. Know how to conduct an experiment
3. Be as far along in math as possible

Biology

Creepy Crawlies and the Scientific Method, Sally Stenhouse Kneidel (book)

Owl Pellet Dissection Kit

Botanical Discoveries Science Fair Kit

Microscope & Biology Kit

Earth Science

National Geographic Earthquakes & Volcanoes Experiment Kit

Smithsonian Weather Center Science Kit

Astronomy

Primer for the Beginning Astronomer/Astromax Introductory Astronomy Binocular Kit

Space Exploration: The Planets, Moon, Mars, Solar System & Rockets

Chemistry

Thames & Kosmos CHEM2000 chemistry kit and 251-experiment manual

Physics

Supercharged Science: Physics Kit

Supercharged Science: Electricity and Robotics Kit

Supercharged Science: Laser Show Kit

Introduction to Electronics

History

1. Study history with a time line
2. Be sure to cover the basics of eighteenth-century American history
3. Teach the difference between primary and secondary sources.

Foreign Language

1. If possible, study 1-2 years of Latin
2. Study English grammar in a systematic, programmed way
3. Investigate Rosetta Stone or other ear-training programs

PRACTICAL PREPARATION

1. Experiment with new ways of learning.

Instruction by parent
Correspondence course graded by parent
Correspondence course graded by school/tutor
Independent study
Class taken at community college/local high school
Class taken online
Instruction by tutor

k12.com
highschool.unl.edu
keystoneschoolonline.com

“accredited secondary distance learning”

**2. Give the student experience
in taking tests and working to a
deadline**

3. Teach the student how to find books at the library

4. Explain the difference between “mediated” and “unmediated” content

5. Work on moving the student towards more independent learning.

Make use of a checklist,
move towards morning and evening check-in.

THURSDAY

Writing _____

Latin _____

French _____

Art _____

Piano _____

History _____

Math _____

Violin _____

Music Theory _____

FRIDAY

Piano _____

Writing _____

History _____

Grammar _____

Math _____

French _____

Reading _____

Astronomy _____

Violin _____

- Help student begin to keep a notebook planner or calendar
- Give student the responsibility for getting up in the morning

PERSONAL PREPARATION

I. Allow the student to question you (in an appropriate manner)

2. Discuss “trigger points” and how to avoid/recover from them

3. Deal with any lingering learning problems