



## Language Arts: Grade 4

The *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts* emphasize the critical importance of building nonfiction background knowledge in a coherent and sequenced way within and across grades. This can be accomplished most effectively, at each grade level, by integrating the topics from history, geography, science, and the arts in the *Core Knowledge Sequence* into the language arts block. Note that in the *Sequence*, there are many cross-curricular connections to history and science topics within Language Arts (e.g., poems, stories, and sayings), as well as to visual arts and music, which can and should be integrated into the applicable domain of study.

**For Grade 4, domains include:** Europe in the Middle Ages; The Spread of Islam and the “Holy Wars”; Early and Medieval African Kingdoms; China: Dynasties and Conquerors; The American Revolution; Making a Constitutional Government; Early Presidents and Politics; Reformers; The Human Body; Chemistry: Basic Terms and Concepts; Electricity; Geology: The Earth and Its Changes; Meteorology.

**NOTE:** The objectives listed in **I. Writing, Grammar, and Usage** are currently under revision, as part of the *Core Knowledge Language Arts* program development for Grades 3–5. The revised Grade 4 goals and objectives will be conceptually consistent with the K–2 language arts sections of the 2010 edition of the *Sequence* and will be posted at [www.coreknowledge.org](http://www.coreknowledge.org) as part of the online *Sequence* as soon as they are available.

### I. Writing, Grammar, and Usage

**Teachers:** Children should be given many opportunities for writing, both imaginative and expository, but place a stronger emphasis than in previous grades on expository writing, including, for example, summaries, book reports, and descriptive essays. Provide guidance that strikes a balance between encouraging creativity and requiring correct use of conventions. Children should be given more responsibility for (and guidance in) editing for organization and development of ideas, and proofreading to correct errors in spelling, usage, and mechanics. In fourth grade, children should be able to spell most words or provide a highly probable spelling, and know how to use a dictionary to check and correct words that present difficulty. They should receive regular practice in vocabulary enrichment.

**Note:** Introduce fourth graders to the purpose of a bibliography, and have them prepare one that identifies basic publication information about the sources used, such as author, title, and date of publication.

#### A. WRITING AND RESEARCH

- Produce a variety of types of writing—including stories, reports, summaries, descriptions, poems, letters—with a coherent structure or story line.
- Know how to gather information from different sources (such as an encyclopedia, magazines, interviews, observations, atlas, on-line), and write short reports presenting the information in his or her own words, with attention to the following:
  - understanding the purpose and audience of the writing
  - defining a main idea and sticking to it
  - providing an introduction and conclusion
  - organizing material in coherent paragraphs
  - documenting sources in a rudimentary bibliography
- Organize material in paragraphs and understand
  - how to use a topic sentence
  - how to develop a paragraph with examples and details
  - that each new paragraph is indented



## B. GRAMMAR AND USAGE

- Understand what a complete sentence is, and identify subject and predicate in single-clause sentences  
distinguish complete sentences from fragments  
identify and correct run-on sentences
- Identify subject and verb in a sentence and understand that they must agree.
- Identify and use different sentence types: declarative, interrogative, imperative, exclamatory.
- Know the following parts of speech and how they are used: nouns, pronouns, verbs (action verbs and auxiliary verbs), adjectives (including articles), adverbs, conjunctions (*and, but, or*), interjections.
- Know how to use the following punctuation:  
end punctuation: period, question mark, or exclamation point  
comma: between day and year when writing a date, between city and state in an address, in a series, after *yes* and *no*, before conjunctions that combine sentences, inside quotation marks in dialogue  
apostrophe: in contractions, in singular and plural possessive nouns  
quotation marks: in dialogue, for titles of poems, songs, short stories, magazine articles
- Understand what synonyms and antonyms are, and provide synonyms or antonyms for given words.
- Use underlining or italics for titles of books.
- Know how the following prefixes and suffixes affect word meaning:

### Prefixes:

- im, in* (as in impossible, incorrect)
- non* (as in nonfiction, nonviolent)
- mis* (as in misbehave, misspell)
- en* (as in enable, endanger)
- pre* (as in prehistoric, pregame)

### Suffixes:

- ily, y* (as in easily, speedily, tricky)
- ful* (as in thoughtful, wonderful)
- able, ible* (as in washable, flexible)
- ment* (as in agreement, amazement)

- Review correct usage of problematic homophones:  
their, there, they're  
your, you're  
its, it's  
here, hear  
to, too, two

**Note:** A brief review of prefixes and suffixes introduced in third grade is recommended. Prefixes: *re, un, dis*. Suffixes: *er* and *or, less, ly*.

## II. Poetry

**Teachers:** The poems listed here constitute a selected core of poetry for this grade. You are encouraged to expose children to more poetry, old and new, and to have children write their own poems. To bring children into the spirit of poetry, read it aloud and encourage them to read it aloud so they can experience the music in the words. At this grade, poetry should be a source of delight; technical analysis should be delayed until later grades.

### A. POEMS

Afternoon on a Hill (Edna St. Vincent Millay)  
Clarence (Shel Silverstein)  
Clouds (Christina Rossetti)  
Concord Hymn (Ralph Waldo Emerson)  
Dreams (Langston Hughes)  
the drum (Nikki Giovanni)

Fog (Carl Sandburg)  
 George Washington (Rosemary and Stephen Vincent Benet)  
 Humanity (Elma Stuckey)  
 Life Doesn't Frighten Me (Maya Angelou)  
 Monday's Child Is Fair of Face (traditional)  
 Paul Revere's Ride (Henry Wadsworth Longfellow)  
 The Pobble Who Has No Toes (Edward Lear)  
 The Rhinoceros (Ogden Nash)  
 Things (Eloise Greenfield)  
 A Tragic Story (William Makepeace Thackeray)

**B. TERMS**

stanza and line

**III. Fiction**

**Teachers:** In fourth grade, children should be fluent, competent readers of appropriate materials. Decoding skills should be automatic, allowing the children to focus on meaning. Regular practice in reading aloud and independent silent reading should continue. Children should read outside of school at least 20 minutes daily.

The titles below constitute a selected core of stories for this grade. Teachers and parents are encouraged to expose children to many more stories, and to encourage children to write their own stories. Children should also be exposed to nonfiction prose: biographies, books about science and history, books on art and music, etc. Also, engage children in dramatic activities, possibly with one of the stories below in the form of a play. Some of the stories below—such as *Gulliver's Travels*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and the stories by Washington Irving—are available in editions adapted for young readers.

**A. STORIES**

The Fire on the Mountain (an Ethiopian folktale)  
 from *Gulliver's Travels*: Gulliver in Lilliput and Brobdingnag (Jonathan Swift)  
*The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and *Rip Van Winkle* (Washington Irving)  
 The Magic Brocade (a Chinese folktale)  
*Pollyanna* (Eleanor Porter)  
*Robinson Crusoe* (Daniel Defoe)  
 Robin Hood  
 St. George and the Dragon  
*Treasure Island* (Robert Louis Stevenson)

**B. MYTHS AND MYTHICAL CHARACTERS**

Legends of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table  
 How Arthur Became King  
 The Sword in the Stone  
 The Sword Excalibur  
 Guinevere  
 Merlin and the Lady of the Lake  
 Sir Lancelot

**C. LITERARY TERMS**

novel  
 plot  
 setting

See also American History 4: American Revolution, re stories by Washington Irving.

**Note:** "The Magic Brocade" is also known as "The Chuang Brocade," "The Enchanted Tapestry," "The Magic Tapestry," and "The Weaving of a Dream."

See also World History 4: The Middle Ages, re "Robin Hood" and "St. George and the Dragon."

See also World History 4: The Middle Ages, feudalism and chivalry, re Legends of King Arthur.



#### IV. Speeches

**Teachers:** Famous passages from the following speeches should be taught in connection with topics in American History 4.

Patrick Henry: "Give me liberty or give me death"  
Sojourner Truth: "Ain't I a woman?"

#### V. Sayings and Phrases

**Teachers:** Every culture has phrases and proverbs that make no sense when carried over literally into another culture. For many children, this section may not be needed; they will have picked up these sayings by hearing them at home and among friends. But the sayings have been one of the categories most appreciated by teachers who work with children from home cultures that differ from the standard culture of literate American English.

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.  
As the crow flies  
Beauty is only skin deep.  
The bigger they are, the harder they fall.  
Birds of a feather flock together.  
Blow hot and cold  
Break the ice  
Bull in a china shop  
Bury the hatchet  
Can't hold a candle to  
Don't count your chickens before they hatch.  
Don't put all your eggs in one basket.  
Etc.  
Go to pot  
Half a loaf is better than none.  
Haste makes waste.  
Laugh and the world laughs with you.  
Lightning never strikes twice in the same place.  
Live and let live.  
Make ends meet.  
Make hay while the sun shines.  
Money burning a hole in your pocket  
Once in a blue moon  
One picture is worth a thousand words.  
On the warpath  
RSVP  
Run-of-the-mill  
Seeing is believing.  
Shipshape  
Through thick and thin  
Timbuktu  
Two wrongs don't make a right.  
When it rains, it pours.  
You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink.