Many of these progymnasmata (preliminary exercises) had been around for years but really began to gel into the discernable exercises during the Hellenistic period. These exercises were for younger boys who were getting ready to study more advanced forms of rhetoric (the writing of full speeches). This meant that students would have to master basic rhetorical tasks before moving on to more complex rhetorical tasks.

Despite the fact that these exercises had been used by rhetoricians for years, we don’t have any full textbooks until the first century CE. Once in place, though, these exercises were used by teachers well into the Renaissance. The most famous of the Greek textbooks is by Aphthonius (4th century CE). What you are looking at in this text is a copy of the exercises that teachers would have the students perform. Since Aphthonius is a bit difficult, you might want to reference the *silva rhetoricae* website on progymnasmata:

http://humanities.byu.edu/rhetoric/Pedagogy/Progymnasmata/Progymnasmata.htm

**Assignment:** Please read the work by Aphthonius (below) and work up a chreia. You need to write in response to all of Aphthonius’ eight categories. Use the following quotation: Isocrates said, “Speaking well is the clearest sign of a good mind.” You are free to interpret this based on your background with Isocrates. (If you don’t like that quotation, you can use: “Songs are more powerful than books”). In writing your chreia:

1. Praise Isocrates or what he said
2. Give a paraphrase of the quotation in your own words
3. Explain why this quotation was said
4. Contrast Isocrates or the quotation with something that is its opposite
5. Compare Isocrates or the quotation with something that is its similar
6. Give an example of what is meant by the quotation
7. Support the quotation with testimony of others (from memory)
8. Conclude with a brief epilog or conclusion

So, your homework is to work up the line “Speaking well is the clearest sign of a good mind” or “Songs are more powerful than books” in the eight different ways listed above (and described by Apthonius below). This is not an academic essay; this is a practice speech that you are writing. You should have some fun with this, but follow Aphthonius’ advice and example closely. In doing so, you join the millions throughout history who have worked up a chreia in rhetoric class. The purpose of this assignment is to give you a sense of what was going in rhetoric classrooms.
The Preliminary Exercises
of Aphthonius the Sophist

This translation is based on the edition of Aphthonius by Hugo Rabe
(Leipzig: Teubner, 1926). There is an earlier translation by Ray
Nadeau in Speech Monographs 19 (1952), pp. 264–85, revised by
Patricia B. Matsen in Readings from Classical Rhetoric, ed. by Pa-
Numbers in brackets refer to pages in Spengel’s edition of 1854, which
remain the standard form of reference to the text; pages in Rabe’s edi-
tion are indicated with R. The anonymous prolegomenon translated
above seems to indicate (p. 74 Rabe) that the work once began with an

17 I.e., Neo-Platonic philosophers.
18 Organikon; cf. Aristotle’s organon, the “instrument” of knowledge. This
passage is an adaptation of Aristotle’s map of learning as described in Metaphysics
6.1, but the author fails to consider the possibility that progymnasmata might be
regarded as “productive” knowledge.
19 Hellenistic grammarian and poet, author of the obscure monologue,
Alexandra.
20 The Cynic of Nature.
“hypothesis” stating the author’s purpose in writing and probably outlining the contents. This, however, has not survived. Portions of a commentary on Aphthonius attributed to John of Sardis are translated later in this volume.

[p. 21 Spengel, p. 1 Rabe]

1. ON FABLE


Fable (mythos) originated with poets but has come to be used also by orators for the sake of the moral. Fable is a fictive statement, imaging truth. It is called Sybaritic and Cilician and Cyprian, varying its names with its inventors, but calling it Aesopic has largely prevailed because Aesop composed fables best of all. Some fables are rational, some ethical, some mixed; rational when a human being is imagined as doing something, ethical when representing the character of irrational animals, mixed when made up of both, irrational and rational. [2R] When the moral for which the fable has been assigned is stated first, you will call it a promythion, when added at the end an epimythion.

AN ETHICAL FABLE OF THE CICADAS AND ANTS, EXHORTING THE YOUNG TO TOIL

It was the height of summer and the cicadas were offering up their shrill song, but it occurred to the ants to toil and collect the harvest from which they would be fed in the winter. When the winter came on, the ants fed on what they had laboriously collected, but the pleasure of the cicadas ended in want. Similarly, youth that does not wish to toil fares badly in old age.

[22]

2. ON NARRATIVE

Narrative (diégema) is an exposition of an action that has happened or as though it had happened. Narrative differs from narration (diégésis) as a piece of poetry (poiema) differs from a poem (poiésis). The Iliad as a whole is a poiésis, the making of the arms of Achilles a poiema.

Some narrative is dramatic, some historical, some political. Imagined narrative is dramatic; narrative giving an account of early events is historical; what orators use in their contests is political. [3R] There are six attributes of narrative: the person who acted, the thing done, the time at which, the place in which, the manner how, and the cause for which it was done.

The virtues of a narrative are four: clarity, brevity, persuasiveness, and hellenism. [21]

A DRAMATIC NARRATIVE CONCERNING THE ROSE

Let anyone who admires the rose for its beauty consider Aphrodite’s wound. The goddess was in love with Adonis and Ares in turn was in love with her, and the goddess was to Adonis what Ares was to her: a god was in love with a goddess and a goddess was pursuing a mortal. The emotion was the same even if the species was different. Struck with jealousy, Ares wanted to do away with Adonis, thinking the death of Adonis would be the end of the love. Ares attacks Adonis. Learning what had been done, the goddess hurried to his rescue, and in her haste, falling on a rose, she stumbled among the thorns and pierces the bottom of her foot. The blood from the wound dripped on the rose and changed its color to the now familiar appearance; the rose, originally having been white, changed to the appearance it now has.

[23]

3. ON CHREIA

Chreia (khreia) is a brief recollection, referring to some person in a pointed way. [4R] It is called chreia because it is useful (khreiodes). Some chreias are verbal, some active, some mixed. One that makes the utility clear by what is said is verbal; for example, Plato said the twigs of virtue grow by sweat and toil. An active chreia is one signifying something done; for example, when Pythagoras was asked how long is the life of men, he hid himself after appearing briefly, making his appearance a measure of life. [5] A mixed chreia consists of both a saying and an action; for example, when Diogenes saw an undisciplined youth he struck his pedagogue, saying, “Why do you teach him such things?” [6]

This is the division of the chreia, and you should elaborate it with the following headings: praise, paraphrase, cause, contrary, comparison, example, testimony of the ancients, brief epilogue.

[21] Hellenismos, or purity of Greek. Aphthonius adds this to the three traditional virtues of the narration as found, e.g., in Theon, ch. 5; cf. above p. 29, n. 107.
A VERBAL CHREIA:
ISOCRATES SAID THE ROOT OF EDUCATION
IS BITTER BUT THE FRUITS ARE SWEET

(Praise) It is right to admire Isocrates for his art; he made its name most illustrious, and in his practice he showed how great the art was and proclaims its greatness, rather than having been himself proclaimed by it. [3R] Now it would take a long time to go through all the benefits he has brought to human life, whether in proposing laws to kings or in advising private individuals, but (we can note) his wise teaching about education.

(Paraphrase) One who longs for education, he is saying, begins with toils, but yet the toils end in an advantage. The wisdom of these words we shall admire in what follows.

[24] (Cause) Those who long for education attach themselves to educational leaders, whom it is frightening to approach and very stupid to abandon. Fear comes on boys both when they are there and when they go to school. Next after the teachers come the pedagogues, fearful to see and more dreadful when they beat the boys. Fright anticipates discovery, and punishment follows fright; they go looking for the boys’ mistakes but regard the boys’ successes as their own doing. Fathers are more strict than pedagogues, dictating the routes to be followed, demanding boys go straight to school, and showing suspicion of the market place. And if there is need to punish, fathers ignore their natural feelings. But the boy who has experienced these things, when he comes to manhood wears a crown of virtue.

(Contrary) If, on the other hand, out of fear of these things someone were to flee from teachers, run away from parents, and shun pedagogues, he is completely deprived of training in speech and has lost ability in speech with his loss of fear. All these considerations [6R] influenced Isocrates’ thought in calling the root of education bitter.

[7R] 4. ON MAXIM

Maxim (gnōmē) is a summary statement, in declarative sentences, urging or dissuading something. Some maxims are protreptic, some apotrepptic, some declarative; and some are simple, some compound, some credible, some true, some hyperbolic: protreptic, as (Odyssey 15.74), “One should be kind to a visiting stranger, but send him on his way when he wants to go”; apotreptic, as (Iliad 2.24), “A man who is a counselor should not sleep all the night”; declarative, as (Demosthenes 1.20), “There is need of money, and without it nothing needful can be done”; and simple, as (Iliad 12.243), “One omen is best, to fight for one’s country”; and compound, as (Iliad 2.204), “Many rulers are not good; let there be one ruler”; and credible, as,

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[37] There is an elaboration of this chreia by Libanius, vol. 8, pp. 82–97, ed. Forster.
[38] Apthonius seems not to realize that the word rhētōrikē does not occur in Isocrates’ writings.
[40] Cf. Isocrates 1.47.
[41] I.e., the slaves who accompanied boys to and from school and supervised their activities generally.
[42] I.e., they make no allowance for human nature, or for the possible bad effect of experience in studies in a man who is a counselor should not sleep all the night.
[43] John of Sardis, translated below, says he spent money on books or oil for his lamp.
[44] There are two elaborations of this one, one by Libanius, vol. 8, pp. 305–309, and another by John of Sardis, translated below.
"Each man is as those he likes to be with"; and true, as "It is not possible for anyone to lead a life without suffering"; and hyperbolic, as (Odyssey 18.30), "Earth nourishes nothing feeble than man."

This is how the maxim is classified, and you should elaborate it with the headings for the chreia: praise, periphrase, cause, opposite, comparison, example, testimony of the ancients, short epilogue.

A chreia differs from a maxim in that a chreia sometimes reports an action, whereas a maxim is always a saying, and in that a chreia needs to indicate a person (as speaker or doer), whereas a maxim is uttered impersonally.

PROTREPTIC MAXIM:

"ONE FLEETING POVERTY, CYRNUS, MUST THROW HIMSELF INTO THE YAWNING SEA AND DOWN STEEP CRAGS" (Theognis 175)

(Praise) By fashioning advice (parainesis) in place of myths, Theognis prevented his poetry from being attacked. Although seeing that other poets thought highly of telling myths, he collected in verse recommendations for the right way to live, avoiding myths himself but at the same time preserving the charm of verse while introducing the profit of advice. And one might praise Theognis for many things, but especially for his wise remarks about poverty.

(Periphrase) And what does he say? Let one living with poverty be content to fall (off a cliff), since it is better to cut life short than to make the sun a witness of shame. [9R] This is his wise statement, and it is easy to see how beautifully it is said.

(Cause) For one who lives in poverty, first, when among boys, does not practice virtue, and when coming among adults he will do all the most objectional things: going on an embassy he will betray his country for money, in the assembly he will speak for silver, and when called to sit as a juror he will give his votes for a bribe.

(Contrary) Not such are those freed from poverty: when boys, they practice the noblest things, and when coming among adults they do everything splendidly, [27] sponsoring choruses at festivals and paying assessments in war time.

(Comparison) Just as those held by a dreadful bond are hindered by it from acting, in the same way those living in poverty are constrained from freedom of speech.

(Example) Consider Irus, who had been born as one of the Ithacans but did not share the same security with the other citizens; rather, his lack of means was so great that his name was changed by poverty; for having originally been called Arnaeus, his name was changed to Iros, deriving his surname from acting as a servant. But what need to mention Irus? When Odysseus, ruler of Ithaca, feigned poverty on his return to his own land, he shared the evils of poverty, had things thrown at him in his own house, and was maltreated by the servant girls. Such is poverty, and hard to bear even when it is only apparent. [10R]

(Testimony) Therefore, I have to admire Euripides who said that it is a bad thing to be in want, and that it is impossible for nobility to counteract poverty.

(Epilogue) So how is it possible to admire Theognis enough when he said such wise things about poverty?

5. ON REFUTATION

Refutation (anaskēue) is an overturning of some matter at hand. One should refute what is neither very clear nor what is altogether impossible, but what holds a middle ground. Those engaged in refutation should first state the false claim of those who advance it, then add an exposition of the subject and use these headings: first, that it is unclear and incredible, [28] in addition that it is impossible and illogical and inappropriate, and finally adding that it is inexpedient. This progymnasma includes in itself all the power of the art (of rhetoric). [40]

REFUTATION:

WHAT IS SAID ABOUT DAPHNE IS NOT PROBABLE [41]

(The False Claim) It is irrational to attack poets, but they themselves stimulate us to oppose them because they first made up sto-

[3] In Odyssey 18.5-7 the suitors give Arnaeus the name Iros, cognate with Iris, messenger of the gods, because he carried messages when ordered; John of Sardis, ad loc., derives the name from eirē, "I speak."


[38] Said also of confirmation, below; understanding of refutation and confirmation is basic to rhetoric.

[40] There are rather few versions of the story of Daphne; the most important are in Ovid, Metamorphoses 1.452-567, Hyginus, Fables 203, and Pausanias 10.7.8; Aphantonius' source is unknown. The Grove of Daphne was a famous suburb of Antioch, doubtless familiar to Aphantonius. There is a brief narrative about Daphne in Ovid, Metamorphoses 1.452-567, but none is given in the other sources.

ries like this about the gods. 43 [11R] How is it not irrational for poets to have belittled the gods and for us to take poets seriously? I myself have been distressed for all the gods who have been trampled in the mud, and Apollo especially, the god whom the poets themselves have made the leader of their own art. What follows, the story they have made up about Apollo’s Daphne, is an example.

(Exposition) Daphne, they say, came forth from Earth and Ladon, 44 and since she excelled many in looks she acquired the Pythian as a lover. Since he loved her, he pursued her, but in pursuing he did not catch her. Instead, Earth received her child and gave birth to a flower with the same name as the maiden (daphné = laurel). Apollo crowned himself with her in changed form, and the plant becomes a crown, put on the Pythian tripod because of his desire for the mortal maiden, and he makes the bloom a token of his art. This is the story they have made up. It remains to test it from the following arguments. 45

“Daphne came forth from Earth and Ladon.” What proof did she have of her birth? For she was human, whereas they had another nature different from hers. How does Ladon join himself with Earth? By flooding her with his waters? Then all rivers may be called husbands of Earth; for all flood her. And if a human has come forth from a river, it is time for a river also to come forth from human beings; [29] for descendants reveal their begetters. [12R] What name do they give to the marriage of a river and earth? A hymeneal is for conscious beings, but earth does not have the nature of conscious beings. Thus, either Daphne must be classified among streams or Ladon be defined as human.

But let it be so, let it be granted to the poets that Daphne was sired by her when he could not persuade her. She prayed to Earth not to be taken and, on fulfillment of her prayer, she disappeared. Her body became a tree, and the tree was the laurel. “The god did not cease in his longing, but changed his feelings for the girl to the branches of the tree and is a lover of her leaves.”

43 Aphonius is apparently thinking of the attacks in elegiac verse on conventional views of the gods by Xenophanes of Colophon in the late sixth century B.C. Note echoes of Xenophanes’ philosophy in the confirmation of the myth in the next chapter.

44 Ladon was the name of a small river in the northwestern Peloponnesus. Ovid and some others identify the Peneus river in Aetolia as Daphne’s father.

45 Spengel’s text indicates a progression of arguments from unclear to impossible, inappropriate, illogical, and inexpedient; Rabe omitted the labels as not original. There is no specific claim that the myth is unclear; most of the arguments involve impossibility, improbability, or lack of logic, though the myth is criticized as irrational.
firming should use arguments opposed to those of refutation and
first mention the good repute of the claimant. Then, in turn,
provide an exposition, and use the opposite headings: clear
instead of unclear, credible instead of incredible, and possible instead
of impossible and logical instead of illogical and appropriate instead
of inappropriate and expedient instead of inexpedient.

This exercise includes all the power of the art (of rhetoric).\textsuperscript{49}

CONFIRMATION:
WHAT IS SAID ABOUT DAPHNE IS PROBABLE

One who speaks against poets seems to me to be speaking against
the muses themselves; for if poets utter what is transmitted to them
by the intent of the muses, how would one seeking to rebuke the
saying of poets not be speaking \textsuperscript{31} against the muses? For my
part, I respect the judgment of all the poets, and most of all that of
the wise man who said that Daphne was beloved of the Pythian, the
kind of statement that some disbelieve.

"Daphne," he says, "came forth from Earth and Ladon." Why,
by the gods, is this incredible? Were not water and earth the source
of all things?\textsuperscript{40} Do not the elements precede the seed of life? But if
all that exists comes forth from earth and water, Daphne corrobo-
rates the common origin of all \textsuperscript{15} by coming forth from Earth
and Ladon. Born whence all things are born, in appearance she excelled
the others, and reasonably so; for the first things given up
from earth come forth with natural beauty; for many changes of
bodies in which beauty is seen have come to pass, but what appeared
first of all is the most blooming. Probably then Daphne did excel in
appearance, since she was the first of those born from earth.\textsuperscript{47}

Since Daphne excelled in beauty, the Pythian conceived a love
for the girl, and very logically; for everything beautiful that lives in
the cities of men came forth from gods; and if beauty is one of the
more blessed of the good things on earth, because beauty is a gift of
the gods, beauty had a god as a lover; for what gods give, all gladly
accept.

\textsuperscript{48} Cf. above, n. 40.

\textsuperscript{49} Xenophanes, frag. 29 and 33, ed. Diels-Kranz. Despite the use of Xenophanes' philosophical teachings in this passage it is unlikely that the myth of Daphne and Apollo figured in his poetry.

\textsuperscript{47} Aphthonius seems to assume that Daphne was the first woman, and that the first would necessarily be the most beautiful. The composition as a whole is filled with invalid assumptions and logical non-sequiturs. Refutation was a much easier