



# Boomerang

## Guidelines for the *Boomerang*

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# WELCOME TO THE *BOOMERANG!*

The *Boomerang Guidelines* are your handbook for making the most of your *Boomerangs*.

New to the *Boomerang*? Grab a cup of tea, busy your kids with a movie or diversion, and read—highlighter in hand, jotting notes in the margins.

Even if you're a copywork and dictation pro, be sure to read the "Copywork and Dictation" section. We've got two new dictation practices for you:

- French-style dictation
- Reverse dictation

Keep the *Guidelines* with your *Boomerangs*, and refer to them throughout the year.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Limits to the use of the <i>Boomerang</i>	4
Managing your <i>Boomerangs</i>	5
Reference materials	5
Intended users of the <i>Boomerang</i>	6
Getting to know the <i>Boomerang</i>	6
<i>Boomerang</i> planner and skills tracker	7
Putting the <i>Boomerang</i> into practice	8
Sample routines	11
Brave Writer principles to guide your sessions	12
Copywork and dictation practices	13
Practical tips for copywork	15
Enchanting copywork and dictation	21
Proofreading marks	22
Think Piece Questions	23
Golden Lines	26

## Attention: Limits to the use of the *Boomerang*!

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## Recommendations for how to manage your *Boomerangs*

If you've purchased the year-long program, we recommend that you remind yourself via email calendar notification to download your issues the first week of each month when they are released. We also suggest that you print it immediately. For extra protection, save the PDFs to an external hard drive in addition to your computer hard drive.

If your hard drive crashes or you forget to pick up an issue of the *Boomerang* and you've purchased the year-long program, sign into your Brave Writer Account to download released guides.

If you've lost access to an individually purchased guide, please email [help@bravewriter.com](mailto:help@bravewriter.com). Send a copy of your receipt (if you have it) or information about how you paid and what kind of subscription you ordered (yearly or as part of a discount bundle). We'll verify your order and send the missed issues to you via email.

## Reference materials

To aid you in exploring topics such as punctuation and grammar, Brave Writer recommends that you purchase a copy of *Nitty Gritty Grammar* and/or *More Nitty Gritty Grammar* by Edith H. Fine and Judith P. Josephson (Publisher: Ten Speed Press). You don't need both. *More Nitty Gritty Grammar* alphabetizes the grammar/punctuation principles, making it an easy-to-use reference. These two books have very helpful explanations

combined with comics that are easily understood by children; you might find them useful to have at home. On the other hand, you can teach punctuation without them if you feel confident in your own explanations or already have grammar reference books you like. Both of these books are widely available online and in major bookstores.

Occasionally you'll find citations in the *Boomerang* that refer to specific concepts in these books. They appear abbreviated with the page number, like this: (NGG—14) or (MNGG—167–168).

## Intended users of the *Boomerang*

The *Boomerang* is addressed to both parent and student. The comments that accompany the dictation passages are addressed to the student, with the assumption that the parent is right there, reading along. In addition to offering grammar, spelling, and punctuation notes, the *Boomerang* comments on the content of the story and poses questions for reflection as you read together. We hope they will stimulate good conversations between parent and teen.

## Getting to know the *Boomerang*

- Use *Boomerangs* in any sequence. Each guide is a self-contained unit.
- *Boomerangs* offer about four weeks of content. Feel free to move more quickly or slowly, as suits your family.
- Print the *Boomerang* or read it on a tablet. Passage sheets may be printed individually.
- Each *Boomerang* contains:
  - **Spin and Spiral** (alternative to scope and sequence) that gives an overview.
  - Four **passages** with detailed notes to be used for copywork and dictation.

- **Golden Lines** prompt.
- Nine **Think Piece Questions** about themes, characters, setting, and writing (added in 2016).
- **Party School Book Club** ideas to celebrate the book (added in 2017).
- Each passage includes three types of notes:
  - **Why this passage:** Explains why the selected passage makes a nice choice.
  - **What to note:** Helps you see the passage’s literary power, notable punctuation, spelling challenges, and/or grammar concepts.
  - **How to teach this passage:** Provides tactics, tips, and techniques.
- Be on the lookout for two types of boxes (added in 2018):
  - **Beyond the Passage:** Provides additional content from the book (beyond the weekly passage) to expand literary analysis or explore a grammar convention.
  - **The Inside Scoop:** Supplies “insider” information to further the knowledge of literary analysis or writing mechanics concepts.

These boxes are intended to extend learning and are optional. Gauge the interest of your teen and explore accordingly.

## *Boomerang* planner and skills tracker

- **Our Week with *Boomerang*:** a checkbox guide to walk you through the steps of preparing and using the *Boomerang* with your teen.
- ***Boomerang* Skills Tracker:** a tool to keep track of a teen’s progress in mastering the mechanics of writing. Print one for each teen.

Ask yourself:

- Does my child regularly apply this concept correctly? *Gets it*

- Does my child need more practice and teaching for this concept? *Learning*
- Is my child not ready to learn or apply the concept? *Saving for later*

The tracker allows you to tailor instruction and copywork/dictation practice to the growth of your child.

Find the tracker and planner at the back of these *Guidelines*.

## Putting the *Boomerang* into practice

### Read

- Read the book at a comfortable pace. Finish before the last week of the guide. Be sure to read past the week's passage before using it for copywork and dictation.
- *Boomerang* books can be read aloud or individually by your teen. Audiobooks work too. Teens who like to read the books to themselves benefit from you reading the same book on your own so you can discuss the passages, literary elements, and Think Piece Questions.

### Weekly Plan

- Review the *Boomerang* content for the week ahead, alone.
- Fill in **Our Week with *Boomerang*** (optional).
- Choose which concepts you'd like to share with your teen (you don't need to teach every item each week). Select concepts based on the skill level of the teen—use the ***Boomerang Skills Tracker***, if you like. Your 14-year-old may be ready to learn about the ellipses in a passage, while your 16-year-old is ready to also investigate the semicolons.
- The notes are addressed to you, the parent. Read them, understand them, paraphrase them to your teen. In some cases, it may be appropriate to read the notes to your



teen or have them read them on their own. Often there is more information than your teen is ready to absorb in one sitting. That's okay! Save some concepts for another week, another time, another *Boomerang*!

- Prepare for copywork and dictation practices (find information on these practices later in these Guidelines).

## Investigate

- Read the passage with your teen. Before teaching the notes, investigate the passage as a family.

### Stuff to ask any passage

- What do you notice about this passage (can be *anything*)?
- What's *this* doing here? (point to a punctuation mark) Ideas?
- What happens if we take this punctuation mark out? (reread aloud)
- What is the mood this passage conveys? Tense? Cozy? Nostalgic? (etc.)
- Do you recognize any literary elements or punctuation marks we've discussed before? Where?
- Can you identify any interesting uses of the parts of speech? Show me!
- What else do you see now?

Make up your own! Play with the passage first, then analyze.

Model how to investigate like this:

- *I find dialogue so interesting. How do the attributive tags give us details about the characters—their body language or facial expressions?*
- *I feel like if I were with the characters in that scene, I'd be irritated. How about you?*

- *This cliffhanger made me want to keep reading. Remember when we read The Scarlet Pimpernel and talked about opening hooks? What do you think is going to happen next? Why do you think this is a good hook? What makes you want to keep reading?*

## Practice

- Ask your teen to use one of the copying/dictation strategies for the passage.

### Copywork

#### French-style dictation

#### Dictation

#### Reverse dictation

See the detailed guidelines for “Copywork and dictation practices” in this guide.

- Copy the passage first (early in the week)
- Select one dictation method to try later in the week with the same passage.
- Occasionally use 2–3 copywork/dictation practices with one passage. Adds value.
- Pick a day in the month to discuss **Golden Lines**. (You pick one too!)
- The nine **Think Piece Questions** are in chronological order. Have your teens pick one to skip and discuss two per week (over scones and tea at the local coffee shop, if you like).

Your teen may want to use a Think Piece Question as a freewrite prompt. See the Think Piece Questions section in these Guidelines for more ways to use these questions.

## Sample routines

These sample routines are here to inspire you. Use what you like, leave the rest.

### Plan

Print guide or view it on your computer or tablet

Print and fill out your **Our Week with *Boomerang*** planner

Print and prep your ***Boomerang* Skills Tracker** for each teen

Prep any copywork or French-style/reverse dictation; print

### With the kids

Day 1: Read the passage aloud; ask it questions—investigate

Day 2: Copywork

Day 3: Discuss items you selected, use highlighter

Day 4: Take a break or discuss the Think Piece Questions of the week

Day 5: Use passage for a version of dictation

OR

### With the kids

Day 1: Read the passage aloud; ask it questions; start copywork

Day 2: Continue copywork; discuss items you selected, use highlighter

Day 3: Take a break

Day 4: Use passage for a version of dictation

Day 5: Discuss the Think Piece Questions of the week

OR

**With the kids**

Day 1: Discuss the Think Piece Questions of the week

Day 2: Read the passage aloud; ask it questions

Day 3: Discuss items you selected, use highlighter; start copywork

Day 4: Take a break or complete copywork

Day 5: Use passage for a version of dictation

**Mix it up!**

- Discuss the Think Piece Questions in the car, over dinner, while weeding the garden.
- Skip copywork or dictation one week (only discuss the notes from that week)
- Listen to the audiobook in the car.
- Use a Think Piece Question or two for a freewriting prompt.

**Let the *Boomerang* fit your needs, your teens, your family!**

**Brave Writer Principles to Guide Your Sessions with the Boomerang**

- Trust the writer and the process.
- Play with words.
- Once is better than never.
- Focus on one thing.
- Have Big Juicy Conversations.

# COPYWORK AND DICTATION

Passages included in each issue can be combined with a range of practices that emphasize different skills. They are described in detail below. Begin with copywork and progress to dictation. Below is a step-by-step walkthrough of several variations. Cycle through them for variety and challenge.

Pro tip: Some of the variations of dictation require you to create and print the passage yourself. Copy and paste the passage directly from the PDF to a blank document, increase the font size, and add returns to increase the spaces between lines.

## 1. Copywork

Begin with copywork. Copywork is the act of reproducing a passage in your own handwriting. You will look carefully back and forth between the passage and your paper, copying it word for word, punctuation mark for punctuation mark. The *Boomerang* includes a single sheet with each week's passage centered on the page.

**Step 1—Print the passage.**

**Step 2—Put the printed passage where you can easily see it.**

Put the page in an easel document holder so the passage is at eye level. Alternatively, lay the page on the table so it is easy to read with minimal movement.

### Step 3—Choose a pencil with an eraser, or set up a keyboard for typing!

### Step 4—Pay attention to indentations.

Note in advance how far to indent each new paragraph. If writing by hand, consider using a second sheet of paper with an indented black line under the sheet used for copywork. This will help you learn to indent with consistency. Note also that some sentences will “wrap” on the handwritten page before they wrap in the printed original. (To wrap a sentence means to stop writing it at the right margin and continue it on the next line all the way to the left.)

### Step 5—Set the timer for seven- to ten-minute intervals.

Go for beautiful, accurate transcription—in the designated writing time. You can slowly lengthen this period from seven to ten to twelve minutes as you progress. Feel free to start with a shorter time frame; choose a length that allows you to give copywork your full concentration. Take several days for longer passages; going a sentence or two at a time.

You know best. Be sure to balance challenge with sustainability. The goal is to participate at a level that supports growth, confidence, and positive experiences of reading and writing.

For difficult passages, begin with copywork at a length you can complete error-free. Build to longer copying sessions as your stamina grows. The *Boomerang* passages are long. It is perfectly fine for a student to take a week to complete copying them.

Add dictation to your sessions, one method at a time, at the end of the week.

Charlotte Mason (1842-1923), whose work in education is well-known among homeschoolers, advised that the goal of copywork is to write legibly, beautifully, and accurately. Share these goals with your teens. Encourage excellence by shortening the time frame for copywork so that your teen stays fully attentive and engaged. Make careful reproduction (not quantity) the goal.

### Practical tips for copywork

- **Sticky notes:** Use a single sticky note to place underneath the part of the passage the teen is copying. The teen may move it along as the teen writes the passage to keep his or her place.
- **Book stand:** Put the novel in a cookbook holder open to the page with the copywork passage.
- **Typing:** Copywork and dictation can also be typed on a computer keyboard or old-fashioned typewriter.

## 2. French-style dictation

The following method eases the transition from copywork to dictation.

When Julie Bogart lived in France as an exchange student in college, she discovered that the French use a gradual method of dictation training for their students (of all ages, right into university). She labeled one of those strategies: “French-style dictation,” as a nod to their system.

Instead of transcribing every word of the dictation passage after getting used to copywork, start with the French-style dictation method described below.

### Step 1—Type the passage.

Parent creates a new document on the computer in a large font with triple spaces between sentences, leaving blanks for several of the words in the passage. At first, choose words that the student already knows how to spell. Here's an example:

“As regards actual evidence, such as is necessary in court, I admit that I have none” (*And Then There Were None*, Agatha Christie, p. 157).

#### Retype it like this:

“As \_\_\_\_\_ actual \_\_\_\_\_, such as is \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_, I admit that I have none.”

### Step 2—Read the passage aloud.

Parent hands sheet to student and reads the full passage aloud (saying all the words), slowly. Student reads along on the sheet of paper with the sentence and blanks, and notices the missing words.

### Step 3—Fill in the blanks.

Student fills in each blank with the appropriate words (*regards, evidence, necessary, court*).

This method will train the student to read, listen, and write all at once, but without overwhelming the student with too many words and punctuation conventions to keep in mind at the same time. By starting with a graduated process, someone who is not comfortable with dictation and needs a more gradual approach will quickly gain confidence in doing dictation.



Parents can use this method to isolate homonym misspellings (*here* and *hear*, or *they're*, *their*, and *there*, or *our* and *are*). This method will allow your teens to hear the words in context and to process what they have heard while making a specific choice. Homonym misspellings are frequent with writers younger than 15 so don't be alarmed by them. Just practice differentiating.

### 3. Dictation

Dictation practiced regularly will teach punctuation and spelling more effectively than any other tool. The trick is to do it regularly—once or twice per week. If it becomes tedious, mix it up with copywork (with quotations chosen by your teen) and with reverse dictation (see item 4, below).

#### Step 1—Review the passage before dictation.

Read the passage aloud. Together, parent and student review challenging spelling words. Note the punctuation marks by naming them and pointing to them. This preparation can be done right before dictation.

#### Step 2—Set up the page.

The student writes: name in the upper right corner; date underneath name; title of book, underlined; page number. Skip a line and indent.

#### Step 3—Read the passage.

- Parent reads the passage all the way through, slowly, emphasizing punctuation through intonation.

- Begin again, reading the first clause or several-word chunk (no more than three or four words).
- Student writes the word chunk. Reread the chunk of text if helpful.
- Continue to the next chunk. When you finish a sentence, read it from the start one time through.
- Student reads along, checking to be sure she is satisfied with her spelling and punctuation choices.

#### **Step 4—Continue sentence by sentence.**

Parent rereads sections, using clear intonations (slightly elevated for commas with a pause, definitively lower and final for periods, and so on).

#### **Step 5—Conduct a final read-through.**

Parent rereads entire passage with the student following along. Student makes any final adjustments.

#### **Step 6—Correct the dictation.**

Student

- compares work to original
- corrects any errors or omissions
- underlines any misspelled words and rewrites them at the bottom of the page correctly

#### **Step 7—Apply a rubric.**

At the end, tally the number of punctuation mistakes and spelling errors. The goal is to make fewer than five errors per dictation. If there are more, shorten the passage for the next time.

### Step 8—Celebrate and recreate.

As always, wind up your session with a game, a walk, teatime. Connect with joy.

## 4. Reverse Dictation

Reverse dictation allows the student to be an editor. Get out the red pen! In case your student would like to use professional proofreading marks, a handy reference sheet of the main symbols is included further on in these Guidelines.

### Step 1—Prepare.

Type the passage into a new document without punctuation, deliberately misspelling several words (choose ones that are likely to be tricky). Triple space and use a large font. Print.

### Step 2—Execute.

Student uses pencil or colored pen to correct the passage in the following ways:

- underline all misspellings and rewrite them correctly at the bottom of the page
- insert proper punctuation
- be sure proper nouns and the first words of each sentence are capitalized
- underline any titles
- indicate the need to begin a new paragraph with a pilcrow—that's this symbol: ¶

## Practical tips for reviewing the reverse dictation exercise

### Step 1—Parent reads student’s work.

Before showing the original passage to the student, sit together and read it.

### Step 2—Total the missed punctuation marks and misspellings.

If there is a punctuation mark or misspelling overlooked, mention that there are still X number of remaining errors. (So for instance, the parent might say: “There are three errors you missed.”) Student rereads the whole passage, looking for those errors.

### Step 3—Support the discovery process.

If a student can’t find one of the overlooked errors, narrow the scope of the investigation to a single line. Put a check in the right or left margin of the line on the same side as the missing punctuation mark or misspelling. The student will only search within that line, examining each word or punctuation choice.

### Step 4—Narrow the scope.

If the student needs another clue, parent reveals whether the issue is with spelling or punctuation. Student searches the line again.

### Step 5—Identify the error.

If the student still can’t find the mistake, parent runs a squiggly line under the exact location. Student makes correction on the spot. (This is a great moment for a conversation, for modeling the way a comma might work better than the period currently in that space, for instance.)

### Step 6—Another option for the final step.

Student compares corrected page to original, locates the differences, and makes corrections.

### Step 7—Play the penny game!























For every correct correction, student gets a penny! Give one for identifying a misspelling and another for rewriting it correctly. Give one for each corrected punctuation mark or addition of a missing punctuation mark. Give one for each corrected capital letter.

This step-by-step editing process does more to help the learner internalize the lessons the passage has to teach than if the parent were simply making the corrections. Take the time to make reverse dictation a real learning opportunity.

#### Enchanting copywork and dictation

- Give each teen a candle to light. Teen blows it out when copywork is done.
- Rotate the writing implements: markers, erasable pens, gel pens (with black paper), calligraphy pens, chalk/sidewalk chalk, window markers
- Change the paper: butcher paper on the wall or rolled out on the floor, lined sticky notes, mini moleskin notebooks, a large easel pad, paper with decorative borders, origami paper, black paper
- Use a clipboard, take copywork to a picnic table, do copywork as a family (you copy too!), copy in a new setting (like a library or coffee shop)

## PROOFREADING MARKS

Marks and Meanings	Examples
 capitalize	They fished in lake tahoe. 
 make it lowercase	Five <del>S</del> tudents missed the <del>B</del> us.
<b>sp.</b> spelling mistake	The day was cloudy and cold. 
 add a period	Tomorrow is a holiday 
 delete (remove)	Kim knew the <del>the</del> answer.
 add a word	 Six were in the litter.
 add a comma	He ate peas corn and squash. 
 reverse words or letters	An otter swam in the <del>bed kelp</del> .
 add an apostrophe	The child's bike was red. 
 add quotation marks	 Why can't I go? she cried.
 make a space	He read twobooks. 
 close the space	Her favorite game is soft ball. 
 begin a new paragraph	We had fun.  Next we went to

# THINK PIECE QUESTIONS

Peter Elbow, a writing scholar whose work has greatly influenced Brave Writer’s program, offers helpful ideas about levels of investment in writing and the importance of introducing each at the right time.

There are three levels of investment: high-, low-, and middle-stakes writing.

**High-stakes writing** is the type most of us know best from our years in school. “High stakes” implies that the writing will be evaluated for both form and content. Students demonstrate what they’ve learned in a prescribed format. Format writing means that students are both creating insight and following a particular structure simultaneously. This twofold mission, if introduced too early, can stifle the natural writing voice and original thought as students spend more time trying to match the format than thinking about what they want to say. Mature writers do well with formats.

**Low-stakes writing** is familiar to Brave Writer families. Freewriting, keen observation exercises, written narrations, funneling a topic, writing games, journaling—these are varieties of writing that don’t need revision. These are opportunities to explore thought without structure.

**Middle-stakes writing** is the happy medium. Elbow calls this kind of writing the “think piece.”

*These are exploratory pieces that ask students to think through a topic on paper. They are not essays and don’t have to be organized around a single point, but they are not just messy freewriting either. They need to be cleaned up enough so they are not unpleasant to read. Describe them as thoughtful letters to an interested friend.*

—Peter Elbow, “High Stakes and Low Stakes in Assigning and Responding to Writing”

For middle-grade students, middle-stakes writing is that halfway house between freewriting and essays. The study questions from the *Boomerang* are ideal catalysts for middle-stakes writing. In composing their responses to the questions they will develop their thinking muscles—they'll hone their points, examine and compare ideas, and explore evolving insights. They'll play with writing and thinking simultaneously. Think Piece Questions help your students prepare for the high school academic formats.

## Using Think Piece Questions

Each month includes nine Think Piece Questions for the featured novel. These make excellent, in-depth prompts for writing or discussion. It seems unlikely that any student would be able to (or want to!) answer them all. Discuss some, write about some, skip some.

### Here are more ideas for using the Think Piece Questions:

#### 1. Host a book club party

Invite other teens to read the novels and come prepared to discuss and celebrate the book. Assign one question to each student and ask that student to lead a discussion based on that topic. Explore the questions in writing at home, bring the writing to read to the group to get the discussion going, and then talk about it. Provide book-themed food and decorations. See the Party School Book Club ideas (added in 2017) in your *Boomerang* for inspiration.

#### 2. Keep a literary journal

Record the title and author of the book, month and year it was read, and select one question per week to answer. At the end of the month, add the Golden Line (explained below). By year's end, you'll have a nicely developed reading journal that chronicles your literary insights from an entire school year!



**3. Use the questions for Friday Freewrites**

Each Friday, instead of using the prompts on the blog or simply writing about any topic, evaluate whether or not there is a Think Piece Question that would be worth exploring. Freewrite about it on Friday. Then on Monday, clean it up just enough to make it presentable. You may want to do these freewrites on the computer to give you greater facility in revising and editing. No need to revise it extensively—simply clarify ambiguities, eliminate redundant ideas, fix spelling, and edit run-on sentences. Save, print.

**4. Read the book with a parent and use the questions for a dialogue journal**

Parents and kids can each write answers and exchange them, commenting in the margins on one another's ideas.

# GOLDEN LINES

A Golden Line is a passage from the book that moved the reader (for any reason—humor, poignancy, excitement, mystery revealed, beautiful writing, interesting fact).

Record your Golden Lines in a notebook, with the date, title, author, and page number.

Include a sentence or two about why that line is meaningful to you. Keeping Golden Lines is a wonderful habit to develop as a way to remember a loved book. For many kids raised on copywork, recording Golden Lines is the logical evolution and leads to a lifetime of savoring great quotations!

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

MONTH: \_\_\_\_\_

# BOOMERANG SKILLS TRACKER

Fill in the bubble next to each skill according to your current progress:



## PARTS OF SPEECH:

### Nouns

- Proper nouns
- Common nouns

### Other Parts of Speech

- Pronouns
- Verbs
- Adjectives
- Adverbs
- Conjunctions
- Prepositions
- Interjections
- Articles

## PUNCTUATION:

### Capitalization

- First word of sentence
- Proper nouns

### Apostrophes

- Contractions
- Possessives
- Plurals

### End Marks

- Period
- Question mark
- Exclamation point

### Other Punctuation

- Commas
- Dialogue punctuation
- Semicolons
- Em dashes
- Hyphens
- Ellipses
- Colons

## OTHER SKILLS:

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
-

# OUR WEEK WITH BOOMERANG

## Prep:

- Read the week's passage
- Review possible questions to ask the passage
- Read **What to Note** and **How to Teach** sections
  - ✓ Pick concepts you'll skip this week (too difficult, new, much)
  - ✓ Choose 2-3 concepts to share or review
  - ✓ Note a concept you learned
- Pick a copywork strategy (See Guidelines)
- Prepare passage for one dictation practice (if desired):
  - ✓ Reverse Dictation
  - ✓ Dictation
- Plan copywork "hygge"
  - ✓ Candles
  - ✓ Treats
  - ✓ Colored pens
  - ✓ Coffee shop
  - ✓ Other
- Select 1-2 Think Piece Questions to discuss or freewrite
  - ✓ Conversation
  - ✓ Freewrite

## With Teens:

- Teen reads passage aloud
- Ask the passage questions together
- Highlight in an array of colors:
  - ✓ Vocabulary and grammar
  - ✓ Punctuation marks
  - ✓ Literary elements
- Discuss selected concepts from **What to Note** and **How to Teach** sections
  - ✓ Look for them in the passage
  - ✓ Note them in other reading this week
- Set copywork goals with your teen
  - ✓ \_\_\_ Number of sentences, paragraphs, minutes
  - ✓ Teen completes
- Dictation completed
- Discuss one Think Piece Question
- Freewrite a response to one Think Piece Question
- Record breakthroughs in skills and insight
  - ✓ -----
  - ✓ -----
- Celebrate with your teen!

## Monthly

- Provide your teen with book darts or a highlighter to mark favorite passages
- Pick one Think Piece Question to skip
- Copy a Golden Line into a notebook
- Host a book club party!