

Title: Teaching Rhetoric Through Rhetorical Exercises

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Abstract: The classical method for developing rhetorical ability was through the *progymnasmata*, a graded series of exercises for developing progressively more complex rhetorical skills. These exercises were designed to develop thinking and composition through the use of *topoi*, “topics of invention,” which provided formal models for students of writing and speaking. However, insights into this curriculum have been lost since the old teachers of rhetoric are dead and the thinking behind the exercises is no longer known to us. I have tried to revive the rhetorical exercises in my own teaching with very good results. I have translated the Greek texts and the medieval commentaries. Listening to my students’ reflections, I have started to understand the ingenious design invented by the masters of rhetoric in ages past.