4

Distinctives of a Charlotte Mason Education

Living Books

By Maryellen St. Cyr

Charlotte Mason introduces the reader to living books and living things as the only form of "mind food" that provides the daily nourishment for the mind to do its work. "For the truth of the matter is that babies and young children explore new experiences with tireless enthusiasm. A girl or boy has a mind which is hungry for ideas. They have an appetite for knowing and experiencing."[1] If a book is not living, Mason refers to it as twaddle, something dry, diluted, predigested, void of vital thought. It seems as if there is nothing in between; books and things either do the work of nourishment, or they do not. Yet I've spoken with many a teacher who might argue otherwise, who might give justification for a book not necessarily living but not nearly dead either. Looking at each book in view of these principles may aid the reader in characterizing books as either living or dead.

• Books are to be well written, not dependent upon illustrations for the story to unfold (*Ourselves*, Part II, p. 11).

• Books must contain literary language to make a direct appeal to the mind, to stir the imagination, and hold the child's interest (*A Philosophy of Education*, p. 248).

• Books must be enjoyed. The ideas they hold must make the sudden delightful impact on the mind, cause the intellectual stir that marks the inception of an idea (*School Education*, p. 178).

• Books are not to be too easy or too direct. If they tell the reader

straightway what to think, he will read but not appropriate the information (*A Philosophy of Education*, p. 303).

• Good books are able to be narrated. The child is able to recall the ordered sequence with graphic details (*School Education*, pp. 179-180).

I have seen children of all ages well fed on thought from direct relationships with living books. Third graders went back to read the "dry parts" of Scriptures as they became familiar with geography and genealogies. Students begged for more history during the lunch hour after an already lengthy lesson. Books of geology and gemology were packed away to be read at home and brought back with students zealously retelling what they knew from the evening's reading. And the daily time of reading a book to students of all ages usually ended in a sigh as the clock reached the final hour of school.

As a school, we carefully choose each book presented to the students in order that these meet the criteria of such living books, whether they are textbooks, read-aloud books, literature books, or resource books. For we desire to give children a full diet of living thought in order to approach life actively, to be in touch with vibrant interest with whatever they see and hear wherever they go. In turn, we want them to reflect upon their thoughts and conduct of life, to be able to value what is good, true, and beautiful. We, as educators, have at times put aside our personal preferences in the way of books and have also been challenged by some limiting beliefs that we have held to, for both our students and ourselves, regarding the level of difficulty or interest of a particular book. There have been times when a book has been contested because of its difficulty or lack of emotional appeal. In response, we have asked the instructor to comply with the demands of the curriculum. And more often than not, the educators have been surprised and delighted with the manner in which the students responded to this living book when presented more carefully.

And then there are other times when a teacher or parent desires a book for the child because he delights in it, but we deem it unfit. Delight alone does not determine whether books are appropriate for the child or for the adult.

> We need not ask what the girl or boy likes. She very often likes the twaddle of goody-goody story books, he likes condiments, highly-spiced tales of adventure. We are all capable of liking mental food of a poor quality and a titillating nature; and possibly such food is good for us when our minds are in need of an elbow-chair; but our spiri-

> tual life is sustained on other stuff, whether we be boys or girls, men or women.[2]

I know that we are living during a time when it is not a usual practice to say no to requests that do not bear an evil intent. Yet the question is not what the book does *not* do, but instead what silly stories and twaddle *does* cultivate in children. What enthusiasms are generated by this kind of thought? What tastes are cultivated?

Children must grow up on the best. There must never be a period in their lives when they are allowed to read or listen to twaddle or reading-made-easy. There is never a time when they are unequal to worthy thoughts well put and inspiring tales well told.[3]

Miss Mason often reminded the educator that he was educating the child to be a man or a woman. We look at the child's requests today and see no harm in letting him read carelessly for an hour or two a day. Yet what would become of the child as a man? And yet further, what would become of the child as a man if the child read first-rate books, the best books of the best authors?

Children brought up largely on books do better than those educated on a few books and many lectures. Wide reading produces children with generous enthusiasms, keen sympathies, a wide outlook, and sound judgment because they are treated from the first as beings of "large discourse looking before and after." They are persons of leisure too, with time for hobbies, because their work is easily done in the hours of morning school.[4]

Daniel Defoe, Louisa May Alcott, Robert Louis Stevenson, Mary Mapes Dodge, William Shakespeare, and the list goes on and on,[5] are friends to my students and myself because we spent many a day in meeting mind to mind.

We do not wish to claim more for the vital importance of good literature in the life of a child than it can bear, but we are nevertheless aware that, if neglected, a child's life can suffer inestimably. Literature, books, education, and life all go hand in hand. The best literature is the human heart of education.

Narration

By Maryellen St. Cyr

Narration Defined

Narration is considered the sum total of Charlotte Mason's philosophy and practice of education. She had discovered narration as the foundation stone of learning. Practiced with the right books, narration would provide the food upon which the mind can grow and thrive.[6] Charlotte Mason defined narration, this fundamental human activity, in the following ways:

> Narration is an art, like poetry-making or painting, because it is there, in every child's mind, waiting to be discovered and is not the result of any process of disciplinary education. A creative fiat calls it forth. "Let him narrate"; and the child narrates, fluently, copiously, in ordered sequence, with fit and graphic details, with a just choice of words, without verbosity or tautology, as soon as he can speak with ease.

And again:

> Narration is the children telling back what they read, hear, see, and let this action of the mind be habitual. The small ones go over in their minds their pictures, their tales, their geography and other readings. As they do so they use their own words, they "tell back" aloud, giving each incident, each point in their own way. If there are several children, they take turns, until the whole is told back.[7]

Narration is retelling. It is not memorization or parroting. It includes feelings and reactions. It is not word for word, but point to point. It is a type of essay response to a broad open-ended questioning, a recall of information.

In the strictest sense, narration is an immediate recall of information seen, read, or heard. In a more liberal sense, it is often used as a quest for information that has been seen, read, or heard after a period of time in the form of exams or evaluation of a child's knowledge on a particular subject. But even in the latter sense, the work of oral narration must have gone on before in order that the child retain the knowledge in question.

The goal of anyone who teaches is for the learner to possess this comprehension and knowledge from a body of information. That is the beginning

stage for further development in the use and discussion of this information. In light of this, the learner must first acquire a degree of knowledge to act upon her experience in a valuable way. Once this knowledge is granted, the mind can be stirred to fuller and clearer knowledge through discussion and further inquiry. The value of these activities depends upon what has gone on before, upon the amount of attention and the quality of assimilation and reflection. As Miss Mason said, "When the mind has not attended or had the leisure to do the work of the mind, only superficial activities of impressions and less thought can be the result of dealing with this information."[8]

Therefore, the goal of any learner must be *attention*. Attentiveness is a vital part of understanding and remembering, for one does not know what one has not attended to. The practice of oral and written narration is a way for the learner to acquire knowledge as well as to be held accountable in an active way for what is seen, read, and heard. The practice of narration is explicitly described below:

• Prepare the passage carefully beforehand, thus making sure that all the explanations and use of background material (vocabulary, dates, and geography) precede the reading and narration.

• Write all difficult proper nouns on the blackboard prior to the lesson. One should never stop in the middle of the reading to explain the meaning of a word or particular map work.

• Read the literature *once*. The child listens carefully with a view to narrate. It is impossible to fix attention on that which we have heard before and know we shall hear again.

• Regulate the length of the passage to be read to the age of the children and the nature of the book. Narrate less before you narrate more. If you read a fairy story, you will find that the children will be able to narrate a page or two if a single incident is described. With a closely packed book, one or two paragraphs between narrations are sufficient. Older children will be able to tackle longer passages, but the same principle should be applied; the length varies with the nature of the book.

• Never interrupt or prompt a person narrating even if a person mispronounces a word. Persons soon forget what they were going to say next when interrupted.

• Correct any mistakes after the narration through your instruction or the prompting of other students. After a child is finished narrating, you may say, "Does anyone else have something to add to the narration?"

• Begin a lesson with a short narration of the previous lesson.

• Use written narration after a child is fluent with oral narration. Keep a record of the written narrations as a way of noting the child's progress. Written narration is not evaluated for spelling and grammar, but for content alone. Special care should be taken that certain spelling and grammar is covered as the need becomes apparent.

• Follow up written narration with the child reading his work aloud to the teacher or to other students.

• Use narration to assess comprehension of the listener, how the child constructs meaning with new knowledge derived from the text put together with background knowledge in ways that make sense.

• Follow the narration with guided questions posed by both teacher and students.

As a multidisciplinary tool, this method of narration is used with individual students, groups of students, and whole classrooms in different contexts, from picture studies to nature studies.

An example of narration across the disciplines follows: Students narrate the antics of *Pinocchio* in the first grade, a biographical sketch of E. B. White in the second grade, problem-solving strategies in word problems in the third grade, the region of the Mesopotamian Valley in the fourth grade, the leadership of Justinian in the fifth grade, the description of van Gogh's *Irises* in the sixth grade, molecular structure in the seventh grade, and the tale of Boaz and Ruth in the eighth grade.

The Benefits of Narration

Narration is the practical outworking of Charlotte Mason's philosophy of education as implied by the statement, "Education is a life, an atmosphere, and a discipline." Narration is underpinned by the view of the learner as a person capable of attention, accountability, insight, and expectation. For it is here that the manifold benefits of narration are seen as characterized in the following:

• Narration instructs the conscience. The interior life of the child is developed through listening to stories and myths that are repeated over again. "Every time a child rattles one off, he taps deep into those emotional roots, for the stories get told from their 'inner senses' out."[9]

• Narration allows the learner to take on an active role. Studies have shown that when the learner is held accountable through retellings, compre-

hension and enjoyment are increased. This role puts the student in an interactive role as an active listener to her own voice, the writer's voice, and/or the reader's voice.[10]

• Narration gives food for the mind. The work of cognition can only take place when the mind is nourished upon real food. This food for the mind can be found in a variety of subjects, not just literature. A history text can teach history in a literary form, as a narrative. The same can be said for studies of science, music, nature, and other subjects. Texts such as these are not as readily available as ones that are diluted or dry but can be sought in a variety of disciplines.

• Narration increases brain activity. The culmination of current research suggests that brain activity is enhanced when learning involves challenging tasks and information, a tolerance for ambiguity, literary language, and intrinsic motivation. When narration is used with literature that encompasses "the best thought of the best writers," we have this optimal state of the mind.

• Narration provides far more information about students' comprehension than answers to questions. Narration incorporates individual constructs, organization, meaning, and vocabulary without the support clues provided by the questioning.[11]

• Narration moves the learner from rote or taxon memory to locale memory. Narration is a strategy in which the learner rehearses, relives, modifies, and integrates interpretations of the author's messages into her own reality, thus bringing about a greater degree of transfer and meaning.[12]

• Narration brings about social interaction. "Knowing is how we make community with the unavailable other, with realities that would elude us without the connective tissue of knowledge. Knowing is a human way to seek relationship, and in the process, to have encounters and exchanges that will inevitably alter us. At its deepest reaches, knowing is always communal."[13]

• Narration maximizes the process of comprehension and meaning. Studies show that children who narrate comprehend far better than those who do not, regardless of the age factor. Younger children who narrated gained more insight and comprehension than older children who did not narrate.

The Quintessential Aspects of Narration

Narration can be seen as a novel idea in which it is approached with younger children more than older children, is infrequent in use, and lacks deliberateness as a methodology to sustain comprehension and retain information. The

education secretary for the western county of Gloucestershire in the 1920s, Mr. H. W. Household, addressed this issue of the infrequent and halfhearted use of narration. A teacher hastily replied, "My children read to themselves, and reading is followed by narration. There is nothing new in this."

Household responded, "Perhaps not. But let us be quite clear. Does the child always learn from the book? Does narration always follow? Is there never more than one reading?"[14]

In point, the student who readily narrates after a single reading will have command of the knowledge read. There will be no getting on with the work of learning with continual aid from the text, prompting from the teacher, or a second and third reading.

There is a danger of supplementing the method of narration with general talking and questioning, losing the clarity of a point-by-point argument posited by a writer. Thus, the burden of our schools is before us, bringing forth passive, inactive minds in students. If the mind is to be active, it must do the work of attending, reflective thinking, and expression through the work of narration. One cannot omit that part of the lesson where the *child* puts *his* mind to the task of retelling through reflective thinking, where he performs the "act of knowing" through verbal or written expression.

The lesson can offer fruitful ideas; thought-provoking questions; enumerations from the reading; analysis of characters, ideas, observations, and much more; a tracing of cause and effect, as well as a multitude of other activities to further knowing and understanding. "[W]e must never forget that without narration the mind will starve; whatever disciplinary exercises we use, they should be *in addition to* and never instead of narration." Physical exercises for the mind are appropriate at times, and the children will benefit from them, but exercise will not take the place of nourishment. In actuality, one cannot exercise what one does not possess, knowledge.

Miss Mason believed that children possessed unmeasured powers intellectually, morally, and spiritually. She defined children as persons—persons who are described as fully human with the power to create (Gen. 1:26), to relate (1 Cor. 12:12), to choose (Rom. 3, 5, and 6), to love (John 13:34-35), to know (Ps. 46:10), to reflect (Gen. 2:19), and to access the supreme Creator, the King and Priest of men and women (Matt. 19:14). She attributed the aspect of mystery to persons as God's image-bearers and said that our attempts to define persons did nothing more than bind them, for people often exceed forms of measurement. Persons have potential for both good and bad

exercise of the natural and fundamental principles of authority and obedience.[15] Miss Mason did not therefore limit children because of class or state. She saw each child as a person who could do the work of learning through the constant effort of attention and observation because of how the created mind works, as well as the innate desire to know.

Here are two educators' statements verifying the beneficial use of narration after a time of disbelief. The first, a country teacher, said:

> The most pleasing fact of all has been the eagerness among the older scholars to narrate, a thing I could never get them to do previously, and, greatly to my astonishment, scholars I thought to be almost helpless are in many cases the most exact and fluent narrators. Because of the oral work the scholars have enlarged their vocabularies, can express their ideas more exactly, and exercise a greater amount of intelligence in answering problems and questions based upon the work studied.[16]

A headmaster of a boys' school stated:

> What has surprised us most is the ready way boys absorb information, and become interested in literature which we have hitherto considered outside the scope of primary school teaching. A year ago I could not have believed boys would read Lytton's *Harold*, Kingsley's *Hereward*, and Scott's *Talisman* with real pleasure and zest, or would study with understanding and delight Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, *King John*, and *Richard II*; but experience has shown that we had underrated the abilities and tastes of the lads; we should have known better.[17]

It seems as though all teachers at times profess limiting beliefs regarding their students and their work. Some of the studies manifested this as well in students eliciting cues from the teachers and teachers providing "instructional support" until the students figure out what the teachers want. Charlotte Mason stated that we as educators must recognize that children are not ruminants (contemplative) intellectually any more than they are physically. "They cannot go over the same ground repeatedly without deadening, even paralyzing results, for progress, continual progress is the law of intellectual life."[18]

The role of the teacher is that of one who gives direction and elucidation in lessons, one who shares sympathies in studies, speaks a vivifying word here

and there, provides a full reservoir of right thought, lays down lines of habit, exercises several powers of the mind, and sows opportunities for learning.

The teacher relies not upon approbation, avarice, emulation, or vanity to bear undue influence upon the learner, but upon the child's innate ability to know. The educator does not manipulate, taking on the responsibility for the child's knowing, but provides a fitting environment wherein the mind is sustained upon ideas, thus continuing the act of education, self-education. And this education is produced from living thought found in living books. The life of thought needs a nourishing, plentiful diet, a diet of ideas. Miss Mason said, "An idea is more than an image or a picture; it is, so to speak, a spiritual germ endowed with vital force—with power, that is, to grow, and to produce after its own kind."[19]

These ideas are the progeny of minds, the work of God among men and women (James 1:17). While these living ideas come from living books, "it is accepted as the nature of a school-book that it be drained of living thought. It may bear the name of a thinker, but then it is the abridgment of an abridgment, and all that is left for the scholar is dry bones of his subject denuded of soft flesh and living color, of the stir of life and power of moving—void of life. It cannot be too often said that information is not education."[20]

Books are to be well written, not dependent on illustrations for the story to unfold. They are to be classic works containing literary language that sparks the child's interest and opens the door to the child's mind. Miss Mason held out the vision: "We shall train a race of readers who will demand literature—that is, the fit and beautiful expression of inspiring ideas and pictures of life."[21]

Personal Reflections Concerning Narration

Teachers' Experiences in a Classroom Application

In view of its far-reaching benefits in transforming mere information into vital knowledge, a plan was devised at Parkview School to institute narration as a commonplace practice with children. Each student in the school would be held accountable to narrate both orally and in written form consistently. Students would be called upon daily to narrate orally throughout the disciplines. Students would participate weekly in a written narration, either written by the students themselves or in the younger grades dictated to an adult recorder. It was our goal that each child would narrate skillfully and naturally.

Some of the educators that have been implementing this plan share the following thoughts:

> Narration is an excellent tool to assess a child's understanding. Many times it is difficult to determine how much a child is absorbing strictly through observation, for often the child who is quiet and seems to be listening has not understood as much as a fidgety child has. Narration makes a child an active, responsible party in the learning process. At the kindergarten level, some students have not had to be accountable for listening for a prolonged period of time. The short, colorful picture books and fast-paced TV programs that children are accustomed to do not allow them to internalize what they have seen or heard. However, narration does this and should be used as soon as possible in developing the habit of attentiveness in children. (Carol James, kindergarten)

> In the years I have worked with narration, I am convinced about its benefits. First, using books with living ideas written above the grade level produce food for thought. I have enjoyed teaching vocabulary in conjunction with narration. It brings connectedness in the learning of words. It is also a wonderful tool to strengthen the habit of attention, thinking, and imagination. I have also taught the elements of literature through narration because the story is so much a part of students. They recognize the various elements with ease. And, lastly, writing assignments have also been a success with narration. The students have been "romanced" with living thoughts, judgments, and predicaments. They are chomping at the bit to write! Narration meets each child at his or her own level and allows each to grow—each one is successful. (Rebecca LaPointe, grade one)

> Narration holds students accountable for the story as a whole. They are not just required to recall the plot, the characters, or the setting. They are accountable to create the same mental pictures the author did through retelling. Narration is an active process as the listener interacts with another's thought in history, science, or math—creating mental masterpieces! (Nicole Dolan, grade three)

> I have seen the benefits of using narration in history. I would present the history lesson to the students as a story with many details and references on maps. Throughout my telling of the story, I would have the students narrate back to me. It was remarkable how they remembered

> the tiny details and even pointed to the map as they were retelling events. Then at the end of the lesson they would narrate the whole story in their "Book of Centuries." Because they had narrated the story in smaller sections, they were able then to write a complete and thorough summary of the story. They did so with great accuracy and attention to details. I believe if they had not narrated throughout the whole process of the lesson, they would not have been able to write such detailed, accurate summaries. This comprehension was not short-termed. On tests weeks later they were able to answer essay questions covering all the king's successes, reasons for war, and other broad questions. Again they would write with great attention to details and summarize points not typical for a fifth grader. Narration greatly improved their comprehension of history. (Mischa Gunn, grade five)

> The nature of narration does not lend itself to second-rate, poorly written literature. As I've incorporated narration more and more into my teaching, the quality of literature and written text has risen proportionately. Using narration was somewhat discouraging to me at first because I did not get the results I wanted right away. It also didn't seem "to fit" the usual fast-paced, high-entertainment, gimmick-dependent methodologies I was used to using. After consistent practice, however, the children were remembering better, comprehending more, and as a result enjoying their lessons. (Rebekah Brown, middle school)

The Students' Experiences

The students also experienced a degree of success in attending, in listening, in assimilating, in thinking, in remembering, in reflecting, in sorting, in comparing, in deciphering, and in expressing their mind-stuff through narration. Read what follows:

> One morning you could see the clouds coming to each island one by one. And then they come to you on your island. You hear the boat pulling, the rudder going "brum, brumm, brummmm." The ripples in the water reach the sand. You smile because the water didn't touch your toes. You could hear seals in the distance, and you know you're not alone. The trees look like ghosts, and you can hear something, but you know it's not your heart. You hear the green plants growing and breaking through the weeds. Then the clouds broke away and the sun shone. All the children went out to the beach to play and jump in the

water. "Wheee! Kersplash!" Then they lied down in the sand and made the form of their body. After everyone is gone, you row out and put the flashlight on the water and see the crab that is left when the sea rode up. The stars look like a hundred pair of eyes. But one pair of eyes was looking everywhere! (A kindergartner on *A Time of Wonder*)

In the cool of the evening, Templeton was hungry and thirsty. So Templeton went out to find some food. Charlotte yelled to him, "Bring me back a word!" Templeton did not like being treated like a messenger boy. "I didn't come here to get newspapers like a newspaper boy," he replied. "I came to enjoy myself." Templeton found an old newspaper behind the cattle barn. In it he found a ham sandwich, a wormy apple and some Swiss cheese. He ate it. Then he tore a word out and went back to the pigpen. "Here," said Templeton. "What does it say?" asked Charlotte. "I need you to read it for me." "It says humble," said Templeton. "Humble has two meanings. It means not proud and close to the ground. That's Wilbur all right," said Templeton. "He's close to the ground and not proud. Now, I'm going to enjoy myself." (A second grader on *Charlotte's Web*—excerpt from the narration)

Butterflies are interesting creatures that have entertained you many times with their bright colored wings. Now, let's take a closer look at these interesting creatures and you'll find out that there is much more to them than just their interesting wings. After mating the butterfly has to find a certain kind of plant to lay its eggs. Once the egg hatches, the caterpillar, also known as pupa, has to eat its host plant. Actually, the caterpillar spends most of its time eating, crawling and resting. Thus, the miracle called metamorphosis begins. The caterpillar grows rapidly as it eats. After a while the caterpillar sheds or slips out of an old skin into a new. Even a new head capsule comes. During a caterpillar's life it sheds four times. Then the pupa forms into a larva, also known as a chrysalis. It takes about two weeks for an adult butterfly to come out of the chrysalis. The adult butterfly wings are lepidopteron meaning scaly wings. If you've ever handled a butterfly, you know how easily these scales come off on your fingers. A butterfly lives off of nectar and its tongue is like a straw, it helps it reach those hard to reach places where the nectar is. There is a hole on the bottom of the butterfly's tongue so it can sip nectar. There are about nine thousand different types of butterflies. (Third grader, nine years of age, on *The Butterfly*)

In evaluating our work with narration during the school year, I have been pleased with the teachers' responses to this methodology and all the implications of philosophy and practice that have also been a part of this implementation process. We have all exercised the attitude of co-learners with the children in a spirit of teachableness and enthusiasm. The students are avidly narrating from living books and are growing in knowledge and in relationship with persons of the past, the world, their fellow classmates, teachers, parents, and God. As a school, we are in the beginning stages of incorporating narration. We are in the process of change from a view of the learner and of teaching and learning that focused on tradition, text, and technique to a view that embraces relationships, living thought, and principles. Through this transition time, I am indebted to the pioneer work of Charlotte Mason who left a sound and relevant treatise to help us in the work of change.

Summary

Children brought up narrating living books "see" what they have conceived in their minds, producing manifold benefits to them as narrators. Narration:

- Provides much more exercise for the mind than is possible under other circumstances.
- Crystallizes a number of impressions, psychologically, completing a chain of experiences.
- Adds to a storehouse of information that can be referred to, built upon, and assimilated to equal the sum of a child's knowing on a topic.
- Gives an opportunity to secure attention, interest, and concentration on a great many subjects.
- Creates the habit of getting mental nourishment from books.
- Presents the child with a wide vocabulary, and her vocabulary increases as she narrates.
- Develops discrimination and love of books.
- Forms a capacity, character, countenance, initiative, and a sense of responsibility in students as good, thoughtful people.
- Grants generous enthusiasms, keen sympathies, wide outlooks, and sound judgment because students are treated as beings of discourse, responsible for knowing.
- Kindles the imagination.
- Develops the style and rhythm for writing in quantity and quality.

Ideas for Narration in the Early Years of the Elementary School

Third Grade

Bible

Tell about the creation of the world in six days.

Give the context in each case, and describe the occasion on which these words were used: "Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister."

Tell about the Israelites' work. How was it made more oppressive?

Arithmetic

Tell about the rules of borrowing in subtraction. Use this problem: 25-8.

Tell about using zero as a place holder.

Literature

Tell about "The Boy Who Cried Wolf."

Tell about Robert Louis Stevenson's childhood.

Tell about Hilda's attitude of feeling cross and sulky in chapter 11.

Narrate chapter 7, "Little Quekle Friends."

Tell the story of Medusa.

History

Tell about the buffalo hunt from *My Indian Boyhood*.

Tell about the Pilgrims' dreadful winter.

Explain the name Continents of Nature.

Tell about the onset of Patroklos.

Tell about Odysseus as the Stranger.

Nature Study

Gather three kinds of leaves and tell all you can about them.

Tell about two kinds of wildflowers.

Tell about a bird and its chirping.

How many kinds of bees are in a hive? What kind of work do they do? Tell about it.

Picture Study

Tell about Rembrandt's being commissioned to paint portraits.

Tell about Benjamin West's first portraits.

Describe Renoir's *Girl with a Watering Can*.

Poetry

Tell about Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "The Children's Hour."

Tell about your experience in the recital.

Describe the village blacksmith.

Ideas for Narration in the Later Years of the Elementary School

Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Grades

Bible

"And Jonathan loved him as his own soul." Of whom was this said? Tell a story of Jonathan's love.

"For they saw that the wisdom of God was in him." Give an account of an incident that displays David's wisdom.

Arithmetic

Define perimeter. Tell how to find the perimeter of a rectangle. A square. A triangle.

Explain to another student the principal steps in adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing fractions.

Literature

Describe your favorite scene in *Heidi.*

Describe a journey to Narnia.

Contrast Jeannette and Jo in Mary Mapes Dodge's poem.

Describe the mood in John Greenleaf Whittier's "In School Days"—relate incidents, thoughts, and setting.

Tell about one tale from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

History

Describe a walk across the eastern seaboard of the United States.

Tell fully how Abraham Lincoln acquired the title of "Honest Abe."

Tell about riding an immigrant train in the late 1800s out west.

Tell about the towns, rivers, and other sites you would see while traveling around Atlanta.

Science

Tell how the following seeds are dispersed: birch, pine, and dandelion. Give descriptions.

Make a diagram of the eye. Explain how we view the world around us.

Picture Study

Tell about Claude Monet's *Women Seated Under the Willows*.

Tell about the use of arrangement and color in Vincent van Gogh's *Sunflowers*.

Mary Cassatt is known for painting peaceful, loving moments shared by mothers and their young children. Tell all you can about one of these paintings.

Information for Parents

How You Can Assist Your Child's Education

Dear Parents,

Throughout the elementary school, students will be receiving assignments in narration each week that are to be assisted by a parent. It is our desire to increase the student's manifest power of attention and clarity of thought, as well as to strengthen their abilities to deal with many subjects. These skills will prepare them to compose not only orally but also in writing. The answer to some questions you may have regarding this process follow.

What is narration?

Narration is retelling. It is not memorization or parroting. And it may include feelings and reactions at times. It is not word for word, but point to point. It is a type of essay response—broad, open-ended, questioning with a recall of certain information.

What does the student narrate?

A specific assignment will be given by the teacher each week. Narration can be the result of the student's, teacher's, or parent's reading aloud; or it may be the result of an oral lesson or something observed.

What part do I, the parent, play in narration?

The parent is the recorder. The child narrates to the parent, who writes down each sentence. (The child is recalling the sequence of events, arguments, main points, items of interest, graphic details—mentally asking what next?)

Some Guidelines to Follow:

• The child is told *prior* to the reading that he or she will narrate, to encourage careful listening/reading.

• The literature is read once.

• The child's response is to be respected. No promptings. No interruptions.

• After the child is finished, read back to him or her what was written. Ask the child if he or she would like to say anything else.

72. Cholmondeley, *Story of Charlotte Mason*, 102.
73. William Wordsworth, "The Prelude," in William Wordsworth, *The Complete Poetical Works* (London: Macmillan, 1888).
74. "Education as the Science of Relations," a paper by Charlotte Mason read to the Sixth Annual Conference of the PNEU, May 6-9, 1902, London. *The Parents' Review 1902*, 485-487.
75. Mason, *School Education*, 95.
76. Cholmondeley, *Story of Charlotte Mason*, 188.
77. Donovan Graham, "A Biblical Yardstick for Teaching" (Lookout Mountain, Ga.: Covenant College), unpublished.
78. Mason, *A Philosophy of Education*, 114.
79. Ibid., 117.
80. Mason, *School Education*, 161-162.
81. Mason, *A Philosophy of Education*, 62-63.
82. Mason, *School Education*, 65-66.
83. Cholmondeley, *Story of Charlotte Mason*, 199.

Chapter Four
Distinctives of a Charlotte Mason Education

1. Susan Schaeffer Macaulay, *For the Children's Sake* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1984).
2. Charlotte Mason, *School Education* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1929), 168.
3. Ibid., 263.
4. Charlotte Mason, *A Philosophy of Education* (London: J. M. Dent, 1954; Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1989), 305.
5. See *Books Children Love* by Elizabeth Wilson (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2002).
6. Essex Cholmondeley, *The Story of Charlotte Mason* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1960; Petersfield, Hants: Child Light).
7. Charlotte Mason, *Home Education* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1896, 1930), 231.
8. Cholmondeley, *Story of Charlotte Mason*.
9. Barry Sanders, *A Is for Ox: The Collapse of Literacy and the Rise of Violence in an Electronic Age* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 46.
10. Ibid.
11. Lynn K. Rhodes and Nancy L. Shanklin, *Windows into Literacy* (Portsmouth, N. H.: Heinemann, 1993).

12. Yetta M. Goodman, Dorothy J. Watson, Carolyn L. Burke, *Reading Miscue Inventory: Alternative Procedures* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 37-59.
13. Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1998), 54.
14. H. W. Household, "Teaching Methods of Miss Mason," booklet, 1920s, 4.
15. Mason, *Home Education.*
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Mason, *A Philosophy of Education.*
19. Mason, *Home Education*, 173.
20. Mason, *School Education*, 169.
21. Charlotte Mason, *Parents and Children* (Union, Maine: Charlotte Mason Research and Supply Co., 1993), 263.
22. Mason, *School Education*, 226.
23. Mason, *Home Education*, 215-216.
24. Ibid., 216.
25. Mason, *A Philosophy of Education*, 51.
26. Ibid., 260.
27. Ibid., 261.
28. Indicating those books, pieces of music, or things of acknowledged excellence that are outstanding and remarkable for a wider vision of humanity.
29. Mason, *A Philosophy of Education,* 271.
30. Mason, *Home Education*, 247.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., 297.
34. Mason, *A Philosophy of Education,* 10.
35. Mason, *Home Education*, 241.
36. Ibid., 242.
37. Ibid., 241.
38. Ibid., 241-242.
39. Mason, *A Philosophy of Education*, 192.
40. Ibid., 183.
41. Ibid., 209.
42. Mason, *School Education*, 130.
43. Charlotte Mason, *Ourselves: Improving Character and Conscience*, Part II (Wheaton, Ill., Tyndale House, 1989), 71.