

Easy Homeschooling
Morality
Subject by Subject

with a literary focus

Volume One

Introduction, Principles. Suggested Works

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Building Upon Former Knowledge—Process, Importance

In books lie the soul of whole Past Time; the articulate audible voice of the Past, when the body and material substance of it has altogether vanished like a dream.

Thomas Carlyle

Introduction

Which subjects will best fulfill our goals as Christian homeschoolers? In this book, we will not only consider subject areas, we will also explore practical application of these subjects. First we will review the basics, such as our basic tools—*the Bible and literature*, as well as our basic technique—*reading*. We will then focus on the school subjects, which are the topic of this book. Future volumes will consider grade-specific techniques and suggested titles and will also look more deeply at general method for history, geography and other important subjects. All volumes will include suggested works and topics of study.

What is really worth learning? In *Morality—Subject by Subject*, we hope to give insight into that question, along with practical ideas for these most important subjects.

Herbert Spencer (1820—1903) was one of the most brilliant men of his generation. Although he is chiefly remembered as the father of Social Darwinism, his words give us food for thought about educational choices.

Men read books on this topic and attend lectures upon that, decide that their children shall be instructed in these branches and not in those: and all under the guidance of mere custom, or liking or prejudice, without ever considering the enormous importance of determining in some rational way what things are really worth learning.

Bible

Without a doubt, the Bible should have primary emphasis in our schools. We desire a moral result. However this result will not manifest overnight. This is why we should “be not weary in well-doing.” The seeds of morality that we sow in our children take time to grow. Do not worry about the outcome, just keep sowing the seeds. Charles Alexander McMurry (1857-1929) was an American educator and author. He said:

There is much anxiety and painful uncertainty on the part of those who charge themselves with the moral training of children. Labor and birth pains are the antecedent to the delivery of a moral being.

The school years from six to sixteen are the formative years. That is when we must put forth our all-out best efforts. We choose to put aside many of our private interests for the sake of our children. We will never regret doing this, but we *will* have regrets if we do not. Along with packing all of the Scripture possible into this *decade of impressibility*, we choose to model Scripture in action by 1) our own example and 2) through the deeds and lives of men and women throughout history. Our concentration, then, should be on the classics.

Classics Defined

There are particular qualities that identify a classic book or poem.

- It communicates permanent and important truth.
- It transfers this truth to the reader in an artistic manner.

No matter when the work was written, to be considered a classic the work will speak to our hearts as much as it spoke to hearts of those long since gone from this earth. The human truths portrayed in classics are eternal, and make the work “eternal.” Rather than fading, the truths shine with growing brightness, but only to those who continue to hold truth in this modern day.

Moreover, real literature has a creative touch. A good writer brings us into the story and setting by words and phrases that play on our senses as well as our heart. Some works have such force, clarity and brilliancy that we know only an artist could have created them. Such is the case with the polished gems of Thomas Gray's *Elegy...* and William Cullen Bryant's *Thanatopsis*.

Because the originator of a great work is its artist, we choose original works. In cases where the original work is in another language, we look to another creative master to translate. Some writers who have rewritten foreign language classics are Scott, Macaulay, Dickens, Kingsley (*Greek Heroes*), Hawthorne (*Wonder Book, Tanglewood Tales*) and Irving.

Purpose of Classics

Although by-products, the purpose of great literature is not to assimilate style, grammar or form, or even to appreciate literature as art. Its primary focus and ultimate purpose is morality—to produce God-fearing children and adults. When we turn our eyes toward this goal, education will have meaning and this goal will also motivate toward excellence in all subjects. Charles McMurray tells us:

Intense study of motives and conduct, as offered in literature, is like a fresh spring from which well up healing waters. The warmth and energy with which judgments are passed upon the deeds of children and adults is the original source of moral ideas. Literature is especially rich in opportunities to register these convictions. It is not bare knowledge of right and wrong developed, but the deep springs of feeling and emotion are opened, which gush up into volitions and acts.

The vast store of early literature is moral literature. With genuine literature, we are lifted into the presence of men and women who incite the moral nature. Through literature, convictions arise naturally. No contrived or enforced morals here. The child, rather, becomes one with

the hero or heroine. In this identification process, enhanced by with the vividness of story, moral judgments are formed in the child. A great advantage to this indirect teaching is that it is received by the child, whereas preaching, especially without supporting prayer, sometimes falls on a deaf ear. Throughout history, greats influenced future greats, as parents nourished their youth with great literature. We can continue following this good path by supplying abundant good literature for our children.

Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.... (Jer. 6:16).

The emotions portrayed in great literature are *our* emotions and literature's effectiveness comes about by the like-mindedness of those characters of literature and ourselves in this day. Right feeling and actions are strengthened by seeing these feelings and actions in others. Stories are effective because of their drama and interest. We see the characters' actions and then, moving on in the story, we see the results of the actions—good or bad. As interest in the character's life increases, the force of a false step or right act moves the hearer to make right choices in his or her life. Could it be that the widespread and increasing lack of character in our world today has been partly because of the lack of real literature in education?

Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good (Is. 7:15).

With a strong foundation in the classics, your students will have an appreciation for what is beautiful and good and will come to reject poorly written, frivolous trash.

Practical Application

Ideally literary masterpieces should be read in their entirety, not as excerpts in readers or other literature texts, although these have been used for years in public education. It is better if the entire work is read in a leisurely manner. Spending more time on a book results in greater interest and, consequently, greater permanent learning. Many times we do not appreciate a book, until we have read several chapters. But then—suddenly—interest arises, the plot thickens and we desire to read “just one more page” before putting the book down. Even when we are away from it, the characters are on our minds. We become friends with the heroes. Great authors draw you into the book gradually. There is a great deal of preparation taking place before we become emotionally involved with the protagonist. This is good, because our identification with him or her is then more fully developed.

When we take our time with a book, the moral force of the masterpiece is that much greater. We see the big picture not just a few individual actions of the characters. In great books, the characters face serious problems in life. Only reading the complete work will fully show their actions and the results of those actions in overcoming their problems.

Reading entire books also gives us a meal from the authors, not just a fleeting taste. We get their full meaning and we are also able to judge more clearly their artistic merits—and apply those to our own writing and expression, a definite aim in using literature for education.

When you read shorter works such as poems, additional poems and works related to the original should be read.

- Ideally, these will be poems or books by the same author and about the subject or time period.
- Read works about the same period by other authors.
- Least desirable for a unified historical study is to read poems and works by the same author, about different subjects or times. See more below under “History” about combining works for your historical studies.

⇒ See Bible teaching and literary technique explained more fully in *Easy Homeschooling Techniques* and *Easy Homeschooling Companion*.

The Starring Subjects

After Bible, the most important subjects are as follows:

- History
- Natural Science
- Formal Studies—math, language, drawing

History best cultivates morality, **natural science** (nature study) reveals the external created world in all its beauty, variety and law—and thereby the Creator—while the **formal studies** enhance and train in the ability to express the two other primary realms of knowledge. The formal studies can be begun as part of the thought studies as the student completes reports and undertakes research. Later the formal studies can be perfected as a tool for further expression of the thought studies. In practical terms, this means that you start reading aloud with your youngest child from interesting books, while your child begins to assimilate learning from the “formal” areas, especially composition, spelling, vocabulary and grammar. Later your older child will study the formal fields more fully to improve these very important areas of education.

1

History

History is the most important of the supporting subjects. Especially today, the characters of history are often better company for us and our children than our next door neighbors. However, even ancient cultures nourished their youth on the traditions of their ancestors.

History, a study of men, is also a study of morals. Each story, each action, demands a moral judgment. *Did he do right? Was that the wrong decision? What were the consequences of that action?* We desire to know what heart-qualities the person had. History's chief purpose is to teach morals by example, not to pump facts and figures into the child. The teacher, too, will benefit and be made a more worthy example of character by these readings of high-quality histories, biographies and works of historical fiction. Here are parent and child in common quest of high character that will bond them forever. The teacher's delights will be the child's delights. Carefully choose your interests in all areas, knowing that your child will surely follow.

Goethe said, "The best is good enough for children." Charlotte Mason recommends, not sketchy stories, but complete life-pictures of these men, women and their surroundings. In order to have the best moral effect, use literary historical works throughout the grades. A body of choice material are selected for each year while the subordinate subjects flow from this central nucleus of history.

⇒ Grade-specific subject techniques and works will be included in the next volume of *Morality-Subject by Subject*.

American History

Not every period in every country's history is worthy of study. American history is rich with moral heroes. There is not a history like our own. American schools should focus primarily on American and English history. For Early American history, use descriptive writing such as that of Bancroft and Irving; "Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers" by Felicia Dorothea Hemans; Webster's and Everett's orations; *Evangeline*; *Hiawatha*; Indian legends and life; *Miles Standish*; *The Knickerbocker History* and other original papers and letters. Then incorporate other countries' histories as they relate to American history. When studying the American Revolution, you could also study other revolutions such as the French Revolution. Other secondary reading material that relate to this American period are the stories of Siegfried (Germany), Alaric (Italy) and Ulysses (Greece).

Start with earliest American history (and Bible history) with both the youngest child and the beginning homeschooler, no matter what elementary grade level they are. The best years of history truly begin with America—so begin your studies with the settlements. Everything had to be built from nothing. Thus early America is a good place to start. The child will be able to logically relate and comprehend when you begin at this beginning.

Principle Epochs of American History

- Ocean Navigators—Columbus, Drake, Magellan; and Explorers—Smith, Champlain, LaSalle, Fremont and others
- Settlement and the French-Indian War
- Revolution and Articles of Confederation
- Constitution and Self-Government
- Civil War Period
- Industrialization
- World Wars
- Twentieth Century to Current Events

Some of the people to study in American history are Winthrop, Penn, Oglethorpe, Stuyvesant, Washington in early American history; DeSoto, LaSalle, Boone, Lincoln, Robertson in the Mississippi Valley; and in the West, Lewis and Clark; and current figures such as Condolezza Rice and President George W. Bush. True leaders are morally strong and superior. Our children's moral natures are formed by hearing of them and approving them. Biographies of these men and women:

- arouse strong interest
- implant moral ideas
- exemplify a period of history

These stories made our present good life possible. By reading of them, you honor the memory of these people with thankfulness to God. In honoring them we "fix" our place as honorable citizens in this day and age.

A classic often gives us a picture of an entire age in an engaging manner. For instance, Scott's *Marmion*, in portraying feudal Scotland, also gives us a look at feudal Europe. It unlocks the doors to ideas and forces of historical importance. To enhance this study read *Ivanhoe*, the Crusades, Roland, *Don Quixote*, *The Golden Legend* and *Macbeth*.

For the United States Civil War Period, I highly recommend *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Whittier's poems. Read Lincoln's speeches. Search out other great men and women of the time. But remember, in all of your reading, the choice is yours whether to read or not read a work.

Choose the best biographies of people such as Charlemagne and Cromwell. Choose novels such as *Hypatia*, *Ivanhoe*, *Last Days of Pompeii*, *Romola*, *Uarda* and *Robinson Crusoe*. Read the heroic Greek myths. Read about Siegfried, King Arthur, Bayard, Tell, Bruce and Alfred. Such stories have the power to transform youthful minds because they are interesting and exemplify good motives and actions.

Suggested Works

- *Little Lord Fauntleroy* by Frances Hodgson Burnett
- *Life of Martin Luther* by Julius Kostlin
- *Autobiography* by Benjamin Franklin
- *Adam Bede, Ramola* by George Eliot
- *Evangeline* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
- *The Lady of the Lake* by Sir Walter Scott
- *Julius Caesar* by Shakespeare
- *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe
- *The Odyssey* by Virgil
- *Divine Comedy* by Dante
- *Idyls of the King* by Alfred Lord Tennyson
- *Miles Standish* by Longfellow
- *Anabasis* by Xenophon
- *Punic Wars* by Livy
- *Lives* by Plutarch
- *Gallic Wars* by Caesar
- *The French Revolution* by Thomas Carlyle
- *Life of Washington, Life of Columbus* by Washington Irving
- *The Iliad* by Homer

People to Read About

- John Winthrop
- William Penn
- Roger Williams
- James Oglethorpe
- Sir Walter Raleigh
- Christopher Columbus
- Samuel Adams
- William Tell
- David Livingstone
- Abraham Lincoln
- Robert Fulton
- Bible Patriarchs

History's Supporting Cast

- Oral Language and Composition
- Geography
- Drawing
- Science

Oral Language and Composition

After each day's reading, the students either tell back (narrate), or write summaries of what was covered. Details about oral language and composition are covered in my books, *Easy Homeschooling Techniques* and *Easy Homeschooling Companion*.

Geography

The study of geography should cover the same region as the history study, not about unrelated places near and far. For early American History, study North America and the Atlantic Ocean, including rivers, bays, forests and mountains.

Later, with the Westward movement, study the Mississippi Valley, a most striking feature of American geography with its lakes, highway rivers and streams. Study the forests that housed game, concealed enemies, had to be cut down. There is much detail as well as an entire picture in each geographical areas related to each period of history.

⇒ Learn geography skills through Knowledge Quest black-line maps.
www.knowledgequestmaps.com

Drawing, The Arts

Drawing supports history and geography. Maps can be drawn of the area studied. Do nature sketches of the indigenous flora and fauna. Listen to music from the period studied. Study and reproduce the art of the period you are studying. Leave no stone unturned in this supplemental learning. However, remember that your primary aim is moral

character and your primary tool, after the Bible, is historical study through literature.

⇒ See general drawing instructions in *Easy Homeschooling Techniques*.

Science

Science can flow from Geography. After studying an oceanic area, study ocean life. When studying the History of the Westward movement study the forest animals such as the beaver—what an intricate example of God’s handiwork, perfectly adapted for his work. Natural science topics are endless. No one will ever be able study them all. See more under Nature Study, below.

O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches (Ps. 104:24).

⇒ Study topics 1) related to your studies and 2) those you or your children have an interest in.

⇒ Remember, you are seeking deep knowledge of few things, not superficial knowledge of many things.

⇒ Every epoch of history has related scientific topics. Be sensitive to them and undertake further research.

2

Nature Study

History looks at the past to reveal the best moral examples, while nature study opens the door to the present real world in all its beauty, variety and law. While reading, spelling, language and arithmetic are tools for acquiring and formulating knowledge, history and nature study are knowledge themselves. They are the “thought studies” whereas the basic “tool” subjects such as reading and writing are “form studies.” In reading aloud and early nature study, thought studies precede form studies, as they should.

Friedrich Adolph Wilhelm Diesterweg, nineteenth-century German educator said:

No one can afford to neglect a knowledge of nature who desires to get a comprehension of the world and of God... or who desires to find his proper relation to Him and to real things.

A purpose of natural science study, now usually known as “nature study,” is to acquire the ability to observe and discern, to discriminate and compare objects in investigation or experimentation. One of the most important needs of educated man is that he retain his inquisitiveness—his awe at God’s world—and nature study trains in this vital trait.

Aims of Nature Study

- Entertainment through animal stories that also teach facts and morals.
- Utility—*What plants are beneficial? Which harmful?*
- Training of the senses.
- Development of the intellect (accurate thinking) by analyzing and determining the specimens.

Yet there is a higher goal. We should seek out insight into nature to better appreciate Creator God. Through nature, God meets our needs and shows His love for us. Although twenty-first century man rarely notices, the birds still sing for us, showing God’s love to all who will see. “He doeth all things well.” Nature reveals His character, which is well-ordered, productive, unchanging and efficient—which should also be our character. Thus we have nature study as the subject second in importance to history in our primary goal of building moral character.

The Simple Approach

If nature study is systematic from first to eighth grades, much science will be learned, so elevate nature study to a regular subject with its own time slot. Study life and habits, homes and organs of insects, plants and animals. Study a squirrel to see how it was perfectly created to adapt to its surroundings. Discover how the squirrel relates to the nut tree and how the weather affects the tree. All work together, mutually beneficial, as the Designer so perfectly planned. While man separates the sciences, in creation all are interdependent—weather, rocks, seasons, plants, animals, and so on. Nature study will result in accurate thinking, self-reliance, inductive thinking and respect for the Creator.

Winter Nature Studies

By Mary E. Woodis

Bad weather doesn’t have to ruin the most wonderful nature walk ever! Just dress your darlings according to the weather and go outside any-

way. It will be fun to quickly gather a few interesting finds or better yet, take the time to look around. There are many things that can be learned by going outside when the weather turns nasty.

- Have you ever wondered where the birds go when it rains?
- What about the ants?
- If the wind picks up, is it blowing in the tree tops or only along the ground?
- In what areas are the puddles forming first?
- Which way is the runoff headed and why?
- If it is cold outside, how are the animals protecting themselves from the cold?
- What are the birds doing to survive?
- Why is it their delicate little feet don't freeze?
- What about the plants?
- How are they reacting to the cold?
- Are there plants that are still green? How is that possible?

Now you have plenty of fuel for a wonderful nature study. Fix yourselves some warm drinks and cuddle up for a time of discovery. Get your favorite nature guide or just surf the internet together for an enjoyable time of discovery. See, nature study doesn't have to end just because the weather isn't cooperating. If the weather or your health absolutely prohibits even a quick trip outdoors, take the time to check around inside and see what you can find. Every house has a few bugs, plants or both!

Discovery Indoors.

Go ahead and give your children the freedom to look in all of those out-of-the-way places and find those bugs. Go before them and make a list of what you find and make it like a treasure hunt. Give them tweezers or some other bug catching picker-uppers, a bug container to put them in and let them go. When they come back with their finds, get out the sketchbooks and let them draw that bug's portrait! Let them use a magnifying glass to really look closely at these critters. God has

created these, “creeping things that creepeth upon the earth,” in such infinite detail it would be a shame to not use this opportunity to marvel at His creation. It was the sixth day of creation when God created these things and now we need to take the proper time to praise Him for His provision on this rainy (or snowy) day. Teaching your children to look more closely, and include all the details in their sketches, will train them in the habit of observation and open a whole new world to them. This also helps to teach them the power of attention. These habits will serve them well their whole life.

⇒ Look at spiders, houseplant communities—tiny flies, mites, spiders, earwigs, aphids, ants, ladybugs or ladybird beetles; silverfish, millipedes, termites in dark places; scorpions and ticks in wooded areas of the country.

What to Do with Your Nature Find

- Identify your find—use field guides, the internet or encyclopedias.
- Sketch your find—be sure you provide your budding artists with the best art supplies.
- Photograph your find if you have reluctant artists. Sometimes it is more fun to just take a picture.
- Display your find attractively.

Are your little artists done with their sketches yet? Be sure that you (or they) have written the Latin name and the common name at the bottom. Don't forget the date and the author's name. Over the years, if you have more than one child, that priceless piece of art might become anonymous. We have cut our sketches out with scrapbooking scissors and stuck them on decorative paper. Then, on another sheet of paper my children copied a poem or Bible verse. After that, I turned them loose with my scrapbooking supplies and came back later to some beautiful creations. In this fashion we have built attractive nature notebooks.

Displaying Nature Finds

In the beginning we had a designated table, shelf or general area to display our nature finds. We have used the ledge of the living room windows, the top of the TV and—sometimes—the biggest shelf on the china hutch. Over time, we had so many treasures that they have become a part of our home decor. Here are some ideas to use your finds.

- Scatter fall leaves around a candle on a mirror for a centerpiece.
- Budding branches with lights twined around them in the winter can light a dark corner.
- Pile your rocks in a dish over a small pump and add water to create a waterfall.
- Use acorns and dried okra pods to create Christmas tree ornaments.
- Pressed spring flowers glued to a background and framed make a lasting piece of artwork or even a personal greeting card.
- Use sea shells, snail shells or discarded egg shells from birds or turtles and rocks from a stream bed around a candle.
- Have a special table for your nature finds.

The scarf or tablecloth on your special table should reflect your theme or the current season. Anything can go on this table. Your children will really enjoy this simple creation once they catch on to the idea. My children have brought me interesting shaped stones, birds feathers, nuts, pine cones, branches, leaves, an abandoned turtle shell, discarded bird's eggs in the spring, miniature pumpkins in the fall and a bouquet of flowers that could be dried. You get the idea!

Mary Woodis is the author of "The Nature Study Idea Book" and other nature titles. See more about the Woodis family's adventures indoors and out at www.crookedpinespublishing.com. Jessie and Mary can be reached at jessiew@hiwaay.net or at 1365 County Road 74, Florence, AL 35633.

Consider the lilies of the field how they grow... behold the fowls of the air... a sower went forth to sow... lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white and ready to harvest... the wind bloweth where it listeth (Luke 12:24, Matt.6:26, Matt. 13:3, John 4:35, John 3:8).

3

Stimulating Interest

Interest keeps the mind alert and active, leading to a steady accumulation of knowledge. Interest will motivate the child, even to accomplish difficult tasks. We are concerned here with genuine or direct interest—not the indirect interest that comes from rewards or competition that can generate selfishness and self-centeredness. Direct interest pushes the student to conquer difficulties and gives a permanent pleasure in the studies. It is essential to develop interest while the child is young. Reading aloud on varied subjects is a proper tool for this, along with nature study. In addition, do not neglect to show interest in the child's interests. This also greatly develops a child's intellect.

Continue memory work in Bible, yet do not neglect to increase retention, by also having the child tell back in his own words. Narration pinpoints children's interests. They will remember the parts of the reading that was most interesting to them.

⇒ See more on narration in *Easy Homeschooling Techniques* and *Easy Homeschooling Companion*.

Sources of Interest

In learning, the sources of interest are many and varied. One source is to be stirred by the variety and novelty of things seen, another is concerned with the whys of the matter and yet another is awakened by what is beautiful and grand in nature and art. Stronger yet, is the interest that flows from common humanity. This is the reason that biographies and novels are important in education. There is also the social aspect, the concern regarding the good of nations. Last, but definitely not least, is religious interest—knowing that God is sovereign and good and that we do truly make a difference in His plan.

Specific Interest to General Knowledge

A sunflower in all its glory is a specific specimen that when studied leads to the general knowledge that flowers have Latin names, parts with names and so on. From sketching and labeling the sunflower drawing, the individual parts are learned. The Latin name may be looked up. The habitat of the sunflower becomes known. Then you can go on and compare other flowers to your specific sunflower study, examining how the others are alike or different. Knowledge is increasingly acquired—general knowledge of flowers and even knowledge about plants in general.

A nearby mountain, its history, geology and weather can lead to a study of mountain ranges in general. In *Techniques* the example is given of traveling to Arizona, visiting a desert museum and then studying deserts in general through reading and other projects.

In history, the study of a single character or characters moves to the study of the period, culture and geography. Individuals shine and draw out interest that later expands to greater knowledge. You could study Bible characters such as David, Abraham, Moses, Esther, Hannah and Paul and then go on to missionaries, cultures and countries.

⇒ A first taste of any subject should always be the brightest, most beautiful and meaningful specimen, individual, poem, artwork or book.

Permanent Interest

The interest that we should strive to awaken in our children should be permanent interest. When your children are young, keep the learning boundaries open. There is time enough to develop individual giftedness and leanings. However do not let a variety of interests lead to superficial knowledge. Too many “subjects” can easily cause this. Instead, especially for young children, keep to the primary subjects of history and nature study—bringing in the others as they arise naturally. Drawing and English can easily become part of nature study, whereas geography can be studied along with history. Let there be a natural flow and not the *brain-switch bell* that divides one class from another. Instead of focusing on quantity of learning, focus on quality and depth of the current topic. Study it all day, all week, all month or even longer if that is where the interest lies.

Cramming facts into children is futile. You are wasting your time, because most facts for most people will not be remembered. The truth is, facts are usually not valuable except for the rare individual who goes on a game show. What you want to develop instead, is a genuine desire for learning and knowledge. With this as your quest, facts will be remembered, especially those that interest your child. Although your children will never learn everything about a subject, they will have the tools for further study if they so desire.

The Will

The qualities of the mind are knowing, feeling and willing. The will needs to be the controlling force, for strong character resides in the will. A primary purpose of learning is to build a strong will inclined toward good and against wrong. Until built, both learning (knowing) and feeling will help in this construction job. As the child learns from godly examples in great literature, sympathies come into play and the will is strengthened. Some of these feelings are desire to please, ambition, love of knowledge and appreciation of the beautiful and good. Other more negative feelings arise such as hate for evil. The will is strengthened thus as great literature is studied. As the child

become an adult (high school), he or she needs to be stimulated to look at the subject from opposing angles, even to criticize it to verify truth or exceptions. In this way, the child becomes a thinking person ready to set out on life, pursuing his or her goals with success. In truth, education's goal is will-training. We seek the result of a will guided by moral ideas. No preaching will be as effective as the influence of present and past lives lived well.

Concentrated Knowledge

A small amount of well-articulated knowledge is more valuable than a large amount of loose and fragmentary information. (McMurry)

Learning is more effective when associations are made in the learners' brains. To create associations, take time to research the geography, history and other ideas read about. If you read about a palm tree, there is no better time to study tropical geography and even history. To teach in this manner, you must be flexible, not rigid. Never forget that you have many years to get reach the goal of well-educated children. Do not worry about covering an era or a wide scope of history such as American history in only one year. Take enough time on each period to accumulate collected and concentrated knowledge. No other learning will be permanent. A spattering of facts have no permanent hook in the brain. However, concentration strengthens confidence and character. In 1895, McMurry prophesied:

The most striking feature of our public schools now is their shallow and superficial work . . . the disease will grow worse before a remedy can be applied. . . children were not born to be simply stuffed with knowledge.

Joseph Payne in *Lectures on the Science and Art of Education* succinctly says, "Learn something thoroughly and refer everything else to it."

Refer your supporting subjects to your primary subject. Always double effectiveness and save time by basing your language lessons

(writing, etc.) on your historical or nature lessons. Do the same with drawing.

⇒ In order to most effectively discover a subject, request that your children tell you what they want to know. Write each point down. You are not finished with this subject and topic until all questions are answered, even those that will come up in researching the present questions.

History and science are interconnected. When studying Bible history and other early history, the most logical science to study is natural science. When studying a later period in history, study the inventions and scientific discoveries of that age. There is a natural process of acquiring new ideas through ideas already learned. This makes learning much easier and quicker. This process is called *Apperception*.

And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches (Prov. 24:4).

4

Apperception

It is very important for us as Christian homeschoolers to make sure that a strong Biblical and moral foundation is laid. As new ideas enter the picture, the old ideas are adjusted and yet, most often, the student goes back most strongly to the original ideas. McMurry in *General Method* says:

Oftentimes, therefore, older ideas or thought masses, being clear, strong and well digested, receive a new impression to modify and appropriate it. This is especially true where opinions have been carefully formed after thought and deliberation.... Sometimes, however, a new theory, which strikes the mind with great clearness and vigor, is able to make a powerful assault upon previous opinions and perhaps modify or overturn them. This is more apt to be the case if one's previous ideas have been weak and undecided. In the interaction between the old and new the latter then become the apperceiving forces. Upon the untrained or poorly equipped mind a strong argument has a more decisive effect than it may justly deserve. As we noticed above, new ideas, especially those coming directly through the senses, are often more vivid and attractive than similar old ones. For this reason they usually occupy greater attention and prominence at first than later, when the old ideas have begun to revive and reassert

themselves. Old ideas usually have the advantage over the new in being better organized, more closely connected in series and groups; and having been often repeated, they acquire a certain permanent ascendancy in the thoughts. In this interaction between similar notions, old and new, the differences at first arrest attention, then gradually sink into the background, while the stronger points of resemblance begin to monopolize the thought and bind the notions into a unity.

Process

Apperception happens automatically. Although in the beginning Babe understands nothing, his or her knowledge store is built, “line upon line.” This knowledge store becomes so vast eventually, that thinking of a person or single thing such as a train whistle, draws from the storehouse details on not only that person but their interests, books read, studies and so on, and of that train, such things as trips taken, vistas viewed and traveling companions. Later, new knowledge builds upon old and we are sometimes surprised by new conclusions upon considering new ideas.

⇒ With literary learning, when you continue on with a subject, but with a new angle, such as another author’s view of it, interest is sure to be present and strengthened.

Importance

Since all future knowledge is based on present knowledge, it is important that we make current learning permanent. This is why the daily oral or written narration is so important. As the student rethinks the topic at hand and reiterates it in the summary, it become permanent knowledge to them.

Because of this, is also very important that we choose that which is worth remembering. We must build constantly on this store of knowledge, a stronger and stronger foundation for future studies. Familiar ideas should not be unused but repeated. Repetition here does not

mean review, or repetition of books, but of ideas, each new title building upon the character built by the last great book. Indeed all fields of knowledge are based on apperception—acquiring new knowledge based on old. In math, a child would not master long division if the times tables were not known. In creating realistic art, color would be of no use, if skill in execution were not first acquired. And in nature study, deeper things of science are learned from familiar things. Therefore, in all learning we make sure the foundation, then build stone by stone upon it.

Our tools are the Bible and great books, and our basic techniques are reading, reading aloud and narration. Our most important subjects are History and Nature Study. Interesting books stimulate interest and knowledge is built upon knowledge. In the next volumes we will look at specific techniques for the subjects, and at books by grade level.

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