



Charlotte Mason: A Liberal Education for All with Jason Barney

Lecture 12: Structuring Lessons: The Narration-Trivium Lesson

Outline:

Structuring Lessons

- When you do Charlotte Mason's narration lesson consistently, you end up training students in the arts of the trivium.
- Steps to follow:
 - Engage in a "first little talk" about what we saw before and what is coming up.
 - Read the rich text itself. The teacher could read aloud, students can read aloud, or the students could read silently.
 - Then there would be narration.
 - In a second little talk the following could be addressed:
 - Moral points could be brought out.
 - Analysis of characters.
 - Draw out meaning and applications to other subjects.
 - Students analyze the text further. They might respond in writing to a discussion question. There could be class periods when students are almost wholly engaged in some sort of analytical or imaginative response to the text that you have been studying.
- Training in the arts of the trivium:
 - First little talk is a pre-grammar activity.
 - The reading the rich text was grammar, reading and interpretation.
 - Narration was a form of pre-rhetoric.
 - In the second little talk, we're really engaged in a sort of dialectic.
 - The response is a type of rhetoric, where students practice rhetoric in various assignments.

Art and Science Distinction

- Aristotle defined the intellectual virtue of art as a state of capacity to make something involving a true course of reasoning. That is different from a science, with is scientific knowledge that involves the capacity to demonstrate or prove that something is the case.
- Science could be in the mind alone, where art joined imitation with cultivated habit and reason to produce something in the world (Clark and Jain).
- What is grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric as arts?



- The art and science of basket weaving are two very different things.
- The act of reading involved collecting letters together in your mind to realize and interpret what that text was. The core art was the art of reading.
- The product of the art of dialectic is the discussion, inquiry, dialogue between multiple people that aims at the truth.
- Rhetoric is the single persuasive discourse by one person, whether spoken or written. Seeking to establish through words what is true.
- A practitioner of a science would prove through the use of words in a dialectical or rhetorical format.
- Students need lots and lots of coached practice to become experts in the trivium arts of dialectic and rhetoric. Practice and habituated development is central for the mastery of an art.
- Train the students to produce the works themselves that correspond with the arts.
- Coach students in working with the tools of learning (the trivium arts) to get at knowledge.
 - First little talk: Help students be prepared for a high comprehension reading of the text. It is so important that they understand as much as possible.
 - Students should be animated with expectation (Charlotte Mason).
 - Reading texts, the work of grammar, is incredibly complex. Share the meaning of hard vocabulary words first (for example “anointing” with oil).
 - The work of grammar requires that students understand what they are reading.
 - Illustrate ideas or concepts that will be hard for students to get initially.
 - The goal is to anticipate and avoid errors in students reading.
 - Reading of the rich text is the core act of grammar.
 - Read aloud for students artfully, model for them the art of reading.
 - Give them the opportunity to imitate you.
 - We would do well to consider more reading aloud.
 - In order to read silently, you need to have verbal imagination for the cadence of speech.
 - We take in meaning and knowledge most naturally through oral language.
 - Have your students add a little drama to bring the text alive.
 - This will help students interpret and love what they are reading better.
 - Take time for the work of narration or other response that helps students engage fully with the text.
 - Second Little Talk: Discussion



- This is where we can really feast on the ideas of a text, and make connections.
- Go further with a text than a mere comprehension of facts.
- Hash out ideas. Ask great questions. Refine the questions.
- Discuss ideas themselves.
- Learn how to live from what you read.
- Students are elaborating from it and enriching sets of connections in their minds.
- Response:
 - Imitation, mimesis, is the classical way.
 - Each subject has its own rhetoric. We can give students imitative assignments.
 - What types of virtues were on display in this historical figure?