



Narration: A Classical Guide with Jason Barney

Lecture 3: What is Narration? Assimilation and Assessment

Outline:

Narration's Two Elements - Narration is a simple practice, but it is elegant, beautiful, and effective.

- **First, the exposure of rich content to students.**
 - This can come in many different forms.
 - Reading out from a text.
 - There could be important times when a teacher gives a lecture or demonstrates a truth (like in mathematics).
 - It could be a beautiful painting.
 - Give them life giving content.
- **Have the students respond to that content, imitatively.**
 - We want students to take the time to tell back as fully as possible the content as they experienced it.
 - It is in the assimilation of telling back that students actually store something in their long term memory.
 - We can't just take in without processing the material. Narration is that processing.
 - This does the work of painting a mental picture in the student's mind.

Two Goals for Narration

- **Assimilation**
 - The act of knowing is what Charlotte Mason calls assimilation.
 - What he can tell, we can be sure he knows. What he cannot tell, he does not know. (Charlotte Mason)
 - We know something if we can tell about something.
 - "We hold that the child's mind is no mere sack to hold ideas, but is rather...a spiritual organism with an appetite for all knowledge..."
Charlotte Mason
 - The mind had what it needed to digest new knowledge, and we simply need to provide the rich content and the opportunity of digestion through narration.
- **Assessment**
 - Summative – These are useful for taking stock of where a student has come and where they should go in the future.



- Formative – These are meant to shape the ongoing process of learning by giving the teacher real time feedback that he can use to devise the curriculum.
- Narration is primarily a formative assessment. Students give you real time feedback on what they understood and what they didn't understand. You listen in as students tell back the process of their learning, so that you could learn for the future how you can help them understand this text better.
- Formative assessments help form memory rather than judgement. Assessment actually helps the process of learning recur. Frequent testing aids memory consolidation and recall. These should be formative assessments either for no grade, low grade, or graded on effort.

Why is narration different from other teaching practices?

- Narration is a long form telling. This is different from a discrete questioning about facts that many teachers in Charlotte Mason's day were using.
- It is not a summary, which is a different skill. Narration is a detailed and full recall.
- It is not memorization or recitation, which is also a valuable skill.
- We are not accustomed to the telling back in full detail.
- The student can tell back in a similar format to the first exposure.
- Narration is not something that only Charlotte Mason used.
 - It is a common practice even in America at that time.
 - This was a traditional teaching practice.