



Narration: A Classical Guide

with Jason Barney

Lecture 5: Three Reasons for Narration

Outline:

Three Reasons for Narration

- **Natural Gift as Image-bearers**
 - Narration is a natural gift from God for education, because it reflects our role as image-bearers.
 - Children narrate by nature. It is natural to a child to tell.
 - Charlotte Mason has Genesis 1 and the creation of humankind in mind.
 - Children are bursting with love for language.
 - Words and particularly storytelling are natural to us as human beings.
 - This amazing gift, with which normal children are born, is allowed to lie fallow in their education. A child's passionate ability to tell what he sees is a foundation stone upon which we build the child's education.
- **Classical Principle of Self-Education**
 - Charlotte Mason said that there is no education but self-education.
 - Dorothy Sayers, *The Lost Tools of Learning* essay bemoaned how the teachers are doing for their pupils the work, which the pupils ought to be doing.
 - The teacher is often the entertainer, and the students are the passive recipients. Students should be engaging in the self-education process.
 - "For the sole true end of education is simply this: to teach men how to learn for themselves, and whatever instruction fails to do this is effort spent in vain." (Sayers)
 - Learning is thinking into one's own understanding a new idea or truth, or working into habit a new art or skill. (John Milton Gregory)
 - No teaching becomes knowledge to any of us until the individual mind has acted upon it, translated it to reappear (like our bodily food) in forms of vitality. (Mason)
 - Self-education is the only possible education. The rest is meat veneer laid on the surface of a child's nature.
 - The children must labor, must get ideas out of books. **He must generalize, classify, infer, judge, visualize, discriminate, labor in one way or another with that capable mind of his.**
 - Are we unwittingly belittling the children? We should give them a rich feast, ask them to digest it, but trust them to do that work of thought.



- **Modern Research about Retrieval Practice**
 - We want students to learn for a lifetime.
 - The gold standard that makes for long term learning, durable retention of material is retrieval practice, which is practicing retrieving from memory what you have learned. This is narration.
 - There are many ways of doing retrieval practice, but one of the most effective forms is the long form retrieval of narration.
 - “Practice at retrieving new knowledge or skill from memory is a potent **tool for learning** and durable retention.” (Brown, Roediger III, McDaniel)
 - “Effortful retrieval makes for stronger learning and retention.” (Brown, Roediger III, McDaniel)
 - “While cramming can produce better scores on an immediate exam, the advantage quickly fades because there is much greater forgetting after rereading than after retrieval practice. The benefits of retrieval practice are long-term.” (Brown, Roediger III, McDaniel)