



Narration: A Classical Guide with Jason Barney

Lecture 7: Using Narration in Lessons

Outline:

Narration is a shift from modern educational assumptions.

- It is primarily about the students own self-education processes being activated and guided along the way.
- The teacher's job is to facilitate a mind-to-mind interaction between the text and the students.
- This is different from student-centric models.

There is more to narration than just exposure to rich content and student's responding.

- Part of the joy of narration is that it frees the teacher from doing the work of learning for the students.
- It puts you in the place of being the philosopher guide to your students (Charlotte Mason).
- There are skills based lessons and disciplinary lessons, which can use narration. The content based subjects like Bible, history, literature, and science give a wealth of content for students' minds to feast on.

Home Education

- Mason recommends short narration lessons for students up to 9 years old.
 - The book should always be deeply interesting (rich content).
 - The curriculum should be a set of living books.
 - There is a first little talk about what happened in the last lesson, and maybe about some other ideas about what might be coming. This raises students' animation and excitement for the lesson. They must attend with interest.
 - The teacher should beware of over-explaining.
 - At the very beginning, start with short texts (like Aesop's fables).
 - There should be a second little talk in which moral points are brought out.
 - As soon as children are able to read, they read either aloud or silently, with a view toward narration.
 - This narration lesson could take only fifteen minutes, but it can grow into a longer period of time.

School Education



- Narration is only the simplest way of dealing with a passage.
- Engage other responses to material besides narration. Students may amplify or summarize a passage.
- Charlotte Mason was not against other analytical ways of engaging with a text. She wants students doing the analysis in addition to narration.
- Ensure that we don't get between the children and the soul of the book.
- Books involve reason and ideas, therefore we should not think of them as lifeless matter on a page.
- We can start with narration as a foundation stone, and then move to higher levels of analysis in different books.
- The teacher's part is to see what is to be done. See what mental discipline as well as what vital knowledge this lesson affords. (Mason)
- Narration itself could be eclipsed by another disciplinary device.

The Narration Lesson Plan

- Trivium Arts: Grammar, Dialectic, Rhetoric
- Pre-Grammar – 1st Little Talk
- Grammar – Reading a Rich Text
- Pre-Rhetoric – Narration
- Dialectic – 2nd Little Talk
- Rhetoric – Response

When might you decide to skip narration and do some other sort of response?

- If you could ensure that the reading was of a reasonable quality, might reading all day for each day of the year achieve better outcomes than those fostered by many schools today?
- What if schools used all their time to have students reading?
- Will any invested yield a stronger return than the best available alternative you know you can make?
- Should I skip narration and have students do some other sort of assignment? That will be a high hurdle rate.