

# Why Did You Choose Classical Education?

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Folks, our conversations over the last couple of days have lit a fire under me. I see a desire for a new approach to classical education: one that is secular and inclusive and that clearly rejects racist and colonialist agendas (no matter how cleverly disguised as "tradition").

If this speaks to you, what are your priorities? We all want to see more high-quality secular curriculum options; that's a given. I'm thinking at a meta-level here.

What is the purpose of education, in your view? Why did you choose classical education? What drew you to it? What tropes (for lack of a better word) in the narrative of "the classical tradition" spoke to you? By tropes, I mean specifically the claims made for classical education, such as "teaching children not what to think, but how to think" or "this is the education enjoyed by our greatest minds" or "children's minds and hearts will be drawn to the Good, the True, and the Beautiful." Since this is an inclusive group, please don't hesitate to mention religious motivations if that's what's true for you.

I'll post my own amorphous thoughts in the comments. Thank you in advance to anyone who is willing to share theirs. 😊

I honestly don't know if what I personally want fits in any meaningful way under the classical umbrella anymore.

I find value in the Trivium as language arts disciplines; in fact, I can't imagine how I would teach without reference to them.

I value the study of literature for its insights into the human experience, and seeing the variety of that experience is the whole point for me. What draws me to literature is, I believe, a fundamental desire for connection with other human beings. The same is true of history. So a global perspective in both those areas is a must for me.

Despite my championing of Latin, I concede that it is not actually a necessary component of a modern education, at least beyond something like a roots program for vocabulary building. Truth be told, if students only have time to learn one language, I'd suggest a practical modern one (that would be Spanish for most English speakers living in the US). I do think Latin has some useful applications for learning grammar and for training kids' attention to detail, but it is certainly not the only way to achieve those ends, nor the most efficient.

I will admit to be indifferent, on a personal level, to all things STEM (no offense to my mathematician and scientist friends!), although I of course

see them as important parts of K-12 education and am grateful that other people care about them so I can have antibiotics and roads and computers. At the private school where I taught, we had a sort of tripod approach: Academics, Arts, and Athletics. That was supposed to promote the "mens sana in corpore sano" (a healthy mind in a healthy body) ideal. I think that was a great strength of our program; I often find classical education too focused on intellectual development at the expense of other aspects of the human person. The child's emotional life, in particular, I believe gets short shrift, especially in environments that stress discipline and order.

I've realized that my allegiance is more to the cultural literacy side of things than to any specifically "western" intellectual or spiritual tradition. The question that obsesses me is: What should children know by the time they leave school?

What attracted me to classical education was its order, its simplicity, and its high ideals.

In the past, religion played a role as well. I'm a spiritual seeker. I have belonged to several Christian denominations over the years and have also practiced in a variety of contemporary Pagan traditions. Classical education seemed like a best-of-both-worlds scenario. In practice...not so much, hence my embrace of secular education.

See? Rambling thoughts.

My ideas are evolving based on the direction the Christian classical education world has taken; the current political situation and the faultlines it has uncovered; and my own resulting intellectual trajectory. I've shared it before, but this image pretty much sums up where I am at the moment.

**"Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better." Maya Angelou**

For me, the conservative Christian phase lasted roughly from 2003 to 2010, in case anyone's wondering, so exactly when LCC and Living Memory were published. However, the first draft of what became the core of LCC was actually created in the late 1990s as a children's education program for Hellenic pagans. So there's that.

Just noting that an orderly, systematic course of study seems to be a big draw for the people who've responded so far.

**Regarding classical education:** It's a beautiful vision for education. That I will say without hesitation.

**Regarding Memoria Press:** Yes, that curriculum map is pretty amazing! I give them a lot a credit for being intellectually consistent; they really did start with the end in mind and built from there.

**Regarding "Good, True, and Beautiful" goals:** This really gets to the heart of things. We all have core values of this sort, but articulating them makes it easier to see how to align our choices with them more consistently.