

Sample Secondary School Schedule					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1-1.5 hours	Com- position / Rhetoric	Logic	Com- position / Rhetoric	Logic	Com- position / Rhetoric
2+ hours	Great Books	Great Books	Science	Great Books	Great Books

Tips for the Secondary School:

- Great Books readings can be arranged by day (Literature on Monday, History on Tuesday, etc.) or students can focus on one book at a time for one to two weeks each.
- By now the student should have established the habit of daily reading. You may assign readings to supplement the Great Books, but bear in mind that some students may require more than two hours a day to complete the main books in the curriculum.
- In determining how much time and effort to give each subject, take into consideration your student's plans after graduation.
- Some students will need four or five days a week for Logic.

Teaching the Great Books

The greatest challenge of the secondary school years, for students and teacher alike, is tackling the Great Books. I have recommended study guides for many of the titles on the book lists, but if your student is not studying *How to Read a Book* by Adler and Van Doren as part of *Classical Rhetoric with Aristotle*, assign it in the summer between eighth and ninth grade. It will teach students to read the Great Books actively, pencil in hand. In addition to reading Adler and Van Doren along with their students, parent-teachers should have a look at *The Well-Educated Mind* by Susan Wise Bauer, which contains questions appropriate to various literary genres. *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* by Thomas C. Foster is another helpful resource. You may also want to read *Deconstructing Penguins*, mentioned in the previous chapter, as it introduces

solid principles for literary analysis that can be applied to everything from *Charlotte's Web* to the *Iliad*.

Bloom's Taxonomy provides a useful framework for discussing literature. Developed by psychologist Benjamin Bloom, the Taxonomy explains the various types of cognition necessary to learning.¹ Although most of our daily intellectual work takes place at the two lowest levels, knowledge and understanding, Bloom posited four higher levels: application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. As teachers, while we want to assure that our students have mastered the basic levels, we also want to move them into the more advanced levels of thought. We can do this by asking certain questions designed to stimulate application, analysis, and the rest. The following chart lists the types of questions appropriate to each level of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Level	Typical Questions
Knowledge	"Who, what, when, where, how...?" "Describe..."
Understanding / Comprehension	"Retell..." "Recount..." "Narrate..."
Application	"How is...an example of...?" "How is...related to...?" "Why is...significant?"
Analysis	"What are the parts or features of...?" "Classify...according to..." "Outline/diagram..." "How does...compare/contrast with...?" "What evidence can you list for...?"
Synthesis	"What would you predict/infer from...?" "What ideas can you add to...?" "How would you create/design a new...?" "What might happen if you combined...?" "What solutions would you suggest for...?"
Evaluation	"Do you agree...?" "What do you think about...?" "What is the most important...?" "Place the following in order of priority..." "How would you decide about...?" "What criteria would you use to assess...?"

1 Benjamin Bloom, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (1956).

While not all of these questions have an obvious application to literature, they can all be adapted to different areas of study.

Note that our current educational system tends to have students jump from knowledge to evaluation while skipping the intermediate steps. In other words, students are asked to make a judgment before they have actually thought about a problem or idea. We've all seen the results: shallow opinions based on little more than emotion and personal bias. Bloom's Taxonomy is a tool to help teachers and students avoid such folly by identifying and exercising higher order thinking skills.

Another question-based approach to discussing the Great Books is the venerable Socratic method. Here the goal is to help students unpack their own assumptions—at base, the false assumption that they already know what you're trying to teach them—by asking carefully pointed questions. Plato's dialogues contain many examples of the method, as do Xenophon's writings about Socrates. It is beyond the scope of a book of this length to teach you how to apply the Socratic method, but in addition to reading Plato and Xenophon, interested readers may gain a sense of how the method works in action from the writings of philosopher Peter Kreeft. Look especially for *The Unaborted Socrates* and the "Socrates Meets" series: *Socrates Meets Jesus*, *Socrates Meets Marx*, *Socrates Meets Descartes*, etc. A brief summary of the method can be found at circeinstitute.org/how_to_teach_12.shtml.