It's Never Too Early - Or Too Late - For Great Books

From the beginning of our homeschooling journey, I have been reading the advice of experts. Many experts encourage parents to use simplified retellings of great books in their homeschool, explaining that an early familiarity with the stories will make the books less intimating to the student later on.

The advice made sense, but I sometimes wondered if I was doing the right thing. By reading *Black Ships before Troy* and Garfield's *Shakespeare Stories,* wasn't I, in a way, ruining it for them? Would it in fact be better for them to experience Shakespeare in the original language, and Homer, if not in the original, at least in the form of one of the classic translations?

I never, however, questioned the merit of telling my children Bible stories. I realized there were a few who only read to their children from the King James Bible, but I didn't agree. I felt kids needed to understand the stories, to gain an intimate familiarity with them. The analysis would come much later.

It wasn't until I started reading *Asimov's Guide to Shakespeare* that I began to see the contradictions in my thinking.

In this book, Asimov helps the plays of Shakespeare come alive for the modern reader by explaining the background and allusions in the plays. The audience in Shakespeare's time was expected to have an understanding of Greek mythology and Roman history, and Shakespeare's plays are liberally sprinkled with references to them. While someone without such background knowledge can still follow the plot of the plays and enjoy the beauty of the words, many of the deeper nuances will be missed.

I reveled in this book, delighted with the deeper meaning Asimov helped bestow. Even the plays I was familiar with became more alive as I began to understand the background and see allusions I had never before been aware of. But some allusions, I realized, I knew quite well:

There's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come: the readiness is all. Since no man has aught of what he leaves, what is't to leave betimes? Let be.

As someone who was raised in church, with weekly Bible lessons told by teachers armed with felt boards, I have long been familiar with Matthew 10:29:

Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

Asimov, however, does not assume such familiarity, and explains the allusion.

I am far from a Bible expert, but I realized how much I take my biblical knowledge for granted. Phrases like "pitched his tent toward Sodom," and "making bricks without straw," do not need to be explained to me; I've heard the stories from my earliest childhood.

But this familiarity has not detracted from my adult delight in the scriptures. The story of the first Passover was once just an exciting tale; now it's a beautiful foreshadowing of how the crucifixion saves us from death. As a child I loved hearing how Elijah defeated the prophets of Baal; as an adult I ponder how our mountaintop moments are often followed by periods of doubt, and how God comes to us in those times in a gentle whisper.

My nine-year-old catches allusions to Greek mythology everywhere -- which he often has to explain to his mother. He sometimes can decipher the meanings of difficult words (and the spells in Harry Potter) from their Latin roots. He thinks of Shakespeare as a writer of exciting stories filled with intrigue and exciting battles, not dry, incomprehensible plays to be slogged through in a high school classroom.

As a Christian, I don't consider the Great Books as important as the Bible, but I value their contribution to Western culture. As Hamlet says:

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

By exposing my children early to the Great Books, I am building a strong foundation. The deeper meanings will become clear to them later, when they have the maturity to understand. And when that time comes, they will have a ready store of knowledge to draw from; the back-story will be firmly in place.

Though this be madness, yet there is method in it.

Staci Eastin blogs at ***http://writingandliving.blogspot.com****.*

Latin at the Core

I homeschooled my children for three years, using modern, popular methods of classical education, before I realized something rather important: I could not explain to anyone exactly what classical education is. I could not give a concise definition of our chosen educational philosophy. This bothered me because although I believed in the plan of classical education I was following, I was also constantly tweaking it to fit our family. The plan, as originally laid out, was too much work. We wanted a rigorous education, yes, but not one that left us working at our desks all day. Some of the recommended curricula were a bust with my children. We could not manage, nor did I feel that we needed, *all* the recommended subjects. I found myself whittling down the recommendations, consolidating, discarding, but always worried. If I dropped this subject, was I missing some vital point of this method of education? Was curriculum "A" classical? Or not? What did it mean to do spelling classically? I needed to grasp the core, the defining principles of classical education, before I could make it work for our family.

Oddly enough, every classical homeschooler I talked with had a different definition. Some said it was language-based. Some said it was history-based. All said it was rigorous, and utilized the stages of learning we know as the Trivium. Many said Latin was important, but others said it was nice but by no means definitive.

I needed definitive.

My search for a concrete definition of "classical education" led me to read Tracy Lee Simmons' *Climbing Parnassus.* When I finished the book I found I was not only able to define classical education, I was able to define it in two different ways. The type of education I had been trying to give my children is more properly called *neoclassical* education. It is education which is rigorous, language/history based, and uses the educational *stages*of the Trivium (grammar stage, logic stage, rhetoric stage) as its organizing principle. The modern interest in classical education was largely spearheaded by Dorothy Sayers' essay "The Lost Tools of Learning." In this essay, Ms. Sayers gives us a blueprint for taking the elder concept of the Trivium and using it to fit a more modern form of education. By defining the Trivium as a process - first you learn the grammar of a subject, then you make logical connections within the subject, then you express original thoughts on the subject - classical education could be freed from the confines of its historical content. Latin, for instance, is still desirable and beneficial; but by using the educational process of the Trivium, you can get the effects of studying Latin but focus on more modern subjects. You can also apply a logical, rigorous system of education to more modern subjects.

This idea caught on like wildfire, and if you search the internet for "Trivium" you will find description after description of the psychological/educational process of learning. When you hear that a school, or a homeschool, provides a classical education, they are most likely pursuing a rigorous education with the process of the Trivium as their organizing principle. By using the Trivium as *process*, one school's educational *content* can look very different from the next school's content. As long as the process is followed, Latin is desirable and still useful, but not *necessary.*

But this is not what classical education used to be. The Trivium has been a part of "classical education" for hundreds and hundreds of years. Originally the Trivium simply meant grammar, dialectic and rhetoric - the three areas of study that were foundational to higher learning. Grammar meant Latin grammar, as the primary focus of any decent education was to enable the child to speak, read and write Latin. Once the Trivium was mastered, a student could go on to the Quadrivium: Music, Arithmetic, Geometry and Astronomy. The Trivium was not a conscious process: you simply had to learn grammar first in order to become proficient in Latin. And you were not educated unless you knew Latin. First that, then everything else. And so the second way I learned of defining a classical education is much simpler: classical education is education that focuses on classical languages, literature, history and arts, and uses the educational *subjects*of the Trivium (grammar, dialectic, rhetoric) as its organizing principle.

True classical education is nothing without Latin. Latin is the foundation upon which all other education is built: Latin grammar, the logic of Latin syntax and translation, the rhetorical skills necessary to express oneself not just competently, but well in Latin, and by extension in English. In this kind of education grammar, logic and rhetoric are what you learn. You learn how language works, you put the pieces together and you use it well. You learn Latin. You learn Greek. You read Latin and Greek, and in reading Latin and Greek you read the philosophy, history, values, and aesthetics that are the foundation of our Western culture. These studies inform the mind and, more importantly, they form the mind. They train the child to think logically, critically, clearly.

At first glance, this older form of education seems to lack relevance. How is a modern student going to manage in the modern world if most of his studies are spent on learning Latin, Greek, the Trivium as content, and classical history and literature? The answer is that when you train the mind using formative methods, when you've trained the child to think logically, precisely, and critically, modern studies are not problematic. The true beauty of focusing on the subjects of the Trivium is simplicity. By paring down the formal academics to that which is most useful and essential, we have time to read, to study science, to practice music, and to play.

I've always been attracted to the education of bygone times. It did the job, and did the job well, for many hundreds of years. That's got to mean something. After reading *Climbing Parnassus* I have become convinced that modern, neoclassical education, while rigorous and excellent, is not my idea of what classical education should be. Classical education is the study of the classics: language, literature, arts, philosophy, aesthetics and history. I agree with the statement that you can't just add Latin to a curriculum and call it classical education. However, I am drawing my line in the sand: if you're not teaching Latin, you're not doing classical education. And the definitive answer to "What is classical education?" is "Latin at
the core."

Stephanie Medcalf is a homeschooling mother to four boys. To read more about their adventures, visit her blog, ***One-Sixteenth****.*

Decluttering Education

Successful homeschooling is purely a matter of setting priorities. One of the greatest flaws in the modern educational system is the attitude that everything can be taught. And in the end, we have exhausted children who know very little about anything at all.

I wrote recently on the **LatinClassicalEd group** about how I consider plenty of free time for my boys to play and pursue their own interests absolutely vital. I believe that children are geared towards the type of play that helps them to grow and mature into adults. In these areas, we can guide, we can help, we can suggest. To do anything more than this robs them of something precious. When this type of activity is discouraged rather than encouraged, children begin to lose the ability to pursue it in the same way. I think we can see this especially well in the example of public school children: after nine solid months of having their days organized from waking to sleeping with little time to play or pursue their own interests, they are faced with three months of complete freedom. And they no longer know what to do with it. They may bounce back after a bit of time, but I believe it's a cumulative effect: the longer a child has lived in an environment where all games were supplied by an adult with rules attached and where all areas of study were determined by someone else, the longer it will take that child to remember how to play and discover new things of interest. It's the cause of the summertime lament -- "I'm bored!" -- by children who no longer remember how to be children.

Shortly after this, I was gratified to find supporting statements on the importance of play from two minds far greater than my own. In *Mere Christianity,* C. S. Lewis writes:

Very often the only way to get a quality in reality is to start behaving as if you had it already. That is why children's games are so important. They are always pretending to be grown-ups: playing soldiers, playing shop. But all the time, they are hardening their muscles and sharpening their wits so that the pretence of being grown-up helps them to grow up in earnest.

And in Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria,* he states:

Still, all our pupils will require some relaxation, not merely because there is nothing in this world that can stand continued strain and even unthinking and inanimate objects are unable to maintain their strength, unless given intervals of rest, but because study depends on the good will of the student, a quality that cannot be secured by compulsion. Consequently if restored and refreshed by a holiday they will bring greater energy to their learning and approach their work with greater spirit of a kind that will not submit to being driven. I approve of play in the young; it is a sign of a lively disposition; nor will you ever lead me to believe that a boy who is gloomy and in a continual state of depression is ever likely to show alertness of mind in his work, lacking as he does the impulse most natural to boys of his age.

And so, when I speak of priorities, this is one of mine: to allow my children time to be children. Much of their play can actually be considered truly educational. Jack is often looking up information to include in their games and explaining these things to his non-reading brothers, which is how two-year-old Jed came to be sitting on the couch shouting something about Robespierre one day last week. But even at its demented worst, when Jed is chasing his laughing brothers around the house waving his "wand" and shouting the death curse at them after seeing *The Goblet of Fire,* I still see the value of their play.

At this point, the question becomes how to provide an education while allowing for plenty of free time. Years ago, a homeschooling friend with older children listened to me talk about wanting to teach Latin and Greek, and she told me that to cover everything that I wanted to cover would take all day. She was right, in a way. It's simply not possible with a modern educational system that has broken education down into tiny little parts.

Take away the *progymnasmata,* a series of exercises in the classical tradition to teach writing skills through the process of imitation, and it has to be replaced with inferior, time-wasting methods of teaching writing. This often starts with teaching a child to write a sentence. This wastes times because by the age that schools begin teaching writing, children are already quite familiar with forming sentences; they are simply unaccustomed to writing them down. But oral narration, which is merely a form of imitation, bridges the gap between the familiar -- speaking -- and the unfamiliar -- writing. Writing encompasses an entirely new set of skills, and yet in the end, it is simply another form of communication. But the modern educational ideal is to treat writing as completely unrelated to speaking, and therefore programs often drag children backwards to teach them to form a sentence as if they had not been forming sentences since they were two or three years old. Once these stilted and unnatural exercises have taken place, the focus becomes getting children to "express themselves." They are expected to learn to write well, but where are their examples, and precisely how are they to write well when they've been given little or no indication of what good writing is? And so begins the round of book reports and "what I did over summer vacation" essays that are the bane of children all over the country. In my mind, these activities are meaningless. They teach nothing about writing well; they only force children to write, and they tie writing to the (for many children, quite difficult) creative processes necessary

for children to come up with their own subject matter. The *progymnasmata,* on the other hand, build on the speaking skills that children already possess and provide examples of both good writing and subject matter. Focus on teaching children to write well, and they will be able to express themselves in writing. Focus on teaching children to express themselves, and they are unlikely to learn either.

Take Latin out of education, and again, it has to be replaced with inferior methods of teaching the same subject matter. Suddenly, a program is needed to teach English grammar, and it will be far less effective than teaching grammar through Latin. For a child to successfully translate an English sentence into Latin, he must know the role of every word in the sentence: this word is the subject and needs to be in the nominative case, and this is the direct object so it must be in the accusative case. Familiarity with English is a hindrance to learning the grammar because it's automatic. It's also simpler since English lacks all the case endings; forming a sentence in English does not require the same amount of thought, and it also does not teach as much about grammar. With the absence of Latin, vocabulary must also be taught separately, so instead of the derivatives of Latin words, children learn lists of unrelated words. Reading comprehension becomes an issue. It shouldn't be, in most cases, for children who learn Latin; any child who has learned to decode complicated Latin sentences will have fewer problems understanding thoughts in his own language, and he has already had to learn to read carefully.

And critical thinking skills replace Logic. Critical thinking is the bastard step-child of Logic. It's what you teach when you don't want to take the time and effort to actually teach children to think logically. The difference between teaching critical thinking skills and teaching logic is the difference between using education as a means to produce an "educated" work force and using education to produce a thinking, educated voting populace.

Therein lies a great deal of my trouble with finding anything worth emulating in modern educational methods: I have different goals for educating my children than the state does, and our goals are far too different for our methods to find much of a meeting ground. In the process of "simplifying" education by removing classical methods and subjects, modern educational methods have actually complicated the entire process and made it much more difficult to teach anything of value.

I've seen people ask questions about scientific studies supporting classical education and challenging the notion that classically educated people should be less susceptible to propaganda and group think -- classifying the claim, in fact, as more propaganda and group think. And I can't help but feel like they've missed the point. As Tracy Lee Simmons said in *Climbing Parnassus,* "Manifestos canvassed for the reform of education have run thus ever since. They depart from the hard, specific, and achievable so that they may embrace the soft, indefinite, and ungraspable." This is what classical education has not done. I'm not spouting wishful thinking when I say that I'm teaching my children to be less susceptible to propaganda and group think; I'm simply stating the logical conclusion of the subjects that we are currently studying, as well as the ones we'll be studying in the future. One very good reason for teaching Latin is that it's early preparation for teaching logic, and teaching logic is training in recognizing the fallacies that we find daily in the news and advertising. It's not soft, indefinite, and ungraspable like critical thinking skills, and therefore it needs no scientific study to "prove" that it works. It's the hard, specific, and achievable. How do you counter propaganda? With logic. How do you produce logical thinkers? By systematically training the mind to think in logical patterns and teaching logic explicitly as a subject.

This is where neoclassical education really breaks down for me. To truly train the mind requires more than filling it with facts and focusing on history. I'm certainly not opposed to memorization and history, but to focus on them is, to me, missing the point, because these are not the type of mental exercises that will train the mind to think logically. And history is not the sort of subject that can be mastered in the same way that Latin and math can be mastered. To me, it's the difference between a series of exercises designed to strengthen only one part of the body compared to a series of exercises designed to condition and train the entire body. Latin is the total mind workout.

An amazing thing happens when we return to the hard, complicated subjects that modern education has dropped: suddenly, we have a lot more free time. Math, Latin, and Greek are our core everyday subjects, and we attempt to do *Classical Writing* at least every other week. Other subjects are covered far more informally. History, literature and poetry, and science are read-alouds and/or required reading. There are no review questions, worksheets, or book reports in this household; these things are necessary only as a means of determining how much a child has learned when the teacher is unable to spend time individually with each student. There are no creative writing exercises which can be both frustrating and detrimental for many children. Instead, there are difficult subjects to master, interesting discussions to have, and plenty of free time for my boys to explore their own interests, develop relationships with their brothers, and chase butterflies through the yard.

To me, these are balanced days. We focus on the "hard, specific, and achievable." We fuel the imagination through reading. And we allow them time to do those things which children do best without adult interference.

KathyJo blogs at ***barefootmeandering.com***

The Tools of Learning Rediscovered

Most 30-year-olds could not do today what was expected of a teenager 200 years ago. Is this because life for teens is so much more complicated now? Because of a general breakdown in the family and community structure? No. The reason that today most adults never do what was expected of a colonial child is because we have shifted our expectations. Until a few generations ago, it was assumed that any learned person would know Latin and Greek, would have read Herodotus, Caesar, Aquinas, et al. For example, when Harvard was founded a student could be accepted if he were at least 14 and could translate a passage from Greek into Latin. Today we spend at least 13 years in school learning drips and drabs about everything under the sun. The 18th-century man specialized in the classics and learned about and from the Greeks and Romans. And that was *all* he learned, at least formally.

Neoclassical education can fall into the same trap the institutional schools do. There are 6,000 years of human development to study (more if you go and look at things like Australiopithecenes). When one uses history as the centering subject in his school, he then has to go out and study all the different accomplishments of mankind throughout history.

In contrast, a traditional classical education is centered on the classical languages. We take the focus away from history and place it on Latin and/or Greek. The Latin grammar is much less complex than the flow of history, yet it provides us with more than enough rabbit trails to follow. As we learn the words for the various provinces of the Roman empire, we learn their modern names and geography. When we come across a Latin phrase we learn its historical background. When we study words used in science we can take the time to learn about those studies. There is no need for separate English grammar, as long as the teacher understands it well enough to draw the comparisons between Latin and English (or has a good grammar reference that will allow her to do so).

The key is to go "further up and further in," to quote C. S. Lewis. If you read even half of the 1,000 good books through 13 years of education, that comes out to just over 38 books a year. I would argue that even ten books a year for an elementary age student is too many. Take just a few books (we are doing two this year) and really study them. A good education is not broad; it is deep. Learn a few things well and you will be able to learn anything you wish. As Dorothy Sayers said, the disciplines of the trivium are the "tools of learning." They do give us a pattern for thinking and analyzing. We can take them and apply them to any subject at any time, after we have them mastered. And this is the key. We have to master these tools for them to be of the best use. But can we master the trivium without applying it in the way it was designed to be used?

I would say no. The reason the trivium works so well is not simply because it follows the way we learn and grow, but also because of the subjects to which it is applied.

Greek and Latin provide training and formation for the mind. Latin is a highly inflected language and is extremely logical. When a young child studies Latin grammar, her mind is being trained into the patterns of thought necessary for the study of logic. When she learns Greek, she prepares herself for elegance of expression. When she translates a passage from one to the other she uses all her faculties to their utmost. Latin also teaches economy of words. A four-word sentence in Latin might translate to ten words in English. I myself never received a classical education as a child, and I find myself often saying in six words what I could have said as well in two. Read C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Tracy Lee Simmons, or any other classically trained writer and you will discover a beauty and an exactitude of language not found in the writings of those who have not been so trained.

So, in a traditional classical course of study, Latin grammar is paramount, and the other parts of the trivium are added in as appropriate. Rhetoric is studied via the progymnasmata, a series of writing exercises designed to both model good writing and encourage creative thought. This begins near the same time grammar study is initiated. Logic is taught first through Socratic questioning, then through formal and material logic as the student is ready. Instead of seeing grammar, logic, and rhetoric as separate stages of development, they are seen as a continuum with studies in the three waxing and waning as a student matures.

Likewise, studies in the quadrivium continue throughout the years of schooling. We no longer send our children out into the world as young teens, so it makes sense that subjects earlier reserved for college study are now taught to children before they leave home. Thus, the second leg of traditional classical education is arithmetic and, later, the higher mathematics and the sciences (including music and art theory).

The third leg of traditional classical education is classics. We study about the Greeks, the Romans, and the Christian societies formed as the influence of Rome retreated. One cannot learn a language in a vacuum. Language is a reflection of the values and mores of a people. The study of the one complements and reinforces the study of the other. This is the study that provides us with a chest, with heart. We learn the tenets of our religion and we learn from the people who created the highest works of art and literature in Western history. It also allows us to fully immerse ourselves in the study of the languages. Studying the culture helps with the study of the language and the study of the

language helps with studying the culture. The two are inseparable. Here is where our focus should be, if we truly wish to master the trivium.

Christians often worry about exposing their children to pagan thought at too young an age (or sometimes at any age at all), but nearly all the giants of Christianity throughout the millennia were classically trained. When St. Paul declaims Gnosticism, he can do so because he knows what Gnostics believe. When he tells the Corinthians that the wisdom of God is foolishness to men, he does so because he understands what Greeks thought and believed. To understand the Bible, we must understand the culture at the time it was written. So, in order to become a great apologist, one had best study the classics.

Learning about ancient cultures is fine, you may say, but what about our own nationâ€™s history? What about state history? Don't we also need to know these things? Of course we do, but I advocate learning them incidentally. History is best learned by experiencing one's culture and community. Visit the historical sites in your area, talk to the older people in your community, take a vacation to Washington DC. Cultivate your student's interest in his own history, and you won't have to teach it. He will apply the tools of learning naturally to a subject that interests him. Our family reenacts several periods of history (American War for Independence, the Scottish Rising of 1745, WWII), and I can guarantee that a child will learn more history in one day at a historical site than in a year of history class, and he will enjoy it much more. Whatâ€™s more, studying the classics gives us a basis for understanding our own political processes. The Founding Fathers took the best that the Ancients had to offer and combined it into our Republic. When we study the classics, we study ourselves.

The classics are our starting point. Once we have learned to apply the tools of learning to their proper subjects, we can move on and apply them to other things. After we have written chreia we can easily learn the five-paragraph essay. After we have learned Latin and Greek, modern languages are easy. With a mastery of classical literary references we can read Milton, Donne, or Shakespeare without footnotes. Studying classical government informs us about modern government. By doing a few things well, we learn the other things we need to know along the way.

Heather Brown is a homeschooling mama to three children. She and her family run a small organic farm with a Scottish flair. Visit her blog at ***cullodenhouse.blogspot.com****.*

Advice to a Harried New Homeschooler

The options for today's homeschoolers seem limitless. Which method? Which curricula? And what about the new baby? And the housework? Or that part-time job? How can I do it all?

Let's face it: We can't do it all. Neither, for that matter, can the schools.

What we can do is focus on the most important things. The history of classical education tells us what those things are: classical languages and math. Less really is more. Ask all those people who wrote the Great Books, the majority of whom were educated this way.

So what do you really need to educate your young children? Less than you might think.

For the youngest ones, all you need is:

- phonics
- some kind of simple number/arithmetic work
- penmanship as far as they are able (which may not be much)
- lots and lots and lots of read-alouds

Once they've got the mechanics of reading down, typically some time between kindergarten and third grade, the basic subjects are:

- Latin (*Prima Latina* is perfect for young children)
- arithmetic
- lots and lots and lots of read-alouds

Many people would add:

- religious instruction
- copywork/penmanship

and some would include:

- music - appreciation, instrument/voice, or both
- memory work (some of which is already included in Latin, math, religion, etc.)

History, science, literature, and the rest fall under "lots and lots and lots of read-alouds" at this age. If kids can read these subjects independently, great, but actually hearing the language read to them is important. Books on tape can be handy, too.

If you get the basics done, a little every day, you will be giving your children an excellent foundation.

So take a deep breath. You can do this. Simplify, simplify!

Drew Campbell is the author of The Latin-Centered Curriculum.

Latin-Centered Classical Education: It's Not What You Think

Latin-centered classical education is not... an attempt to adopt uncritically any ancient or medieval curriculum.

Latin-centered classical education is... the renascence of an educational model that flourished until only a few generations ago and continues to this day in a few tradition-minded schools.

Latin-centered classical education is not... "sola lingua Latina," training in Latin alone.

Latin-centered classical education is... a rich and varied curriculum, "grounded upon -- if not strictly limited to -- Greek, Latin, and the study of the civilization from which they arose" (Tracy Lee Simmons, *Climbing Parnassus,* p. 15).

Latin-centered classical education is not... based on Dorothy Sayers' reinterpretation of the medieval Trivium.

Latin-centered classical education is... the type of education Dorothy Sayers herself had.

Latin-centered classical education is not.. Great Books read only in translation.

Latin-centered classical education is... the type of education enjoyed by those wrote the Great Books: Cicero, Virgil, Quintilian, Augustine of Hippo, Benedict of Nursia, Thomas Aquinas, Vittorino da Feltre, Thomas More, Martin Luther, William Shakespeare, Jonathan Edwards, Thomas Jefferson, C. S. Lewis, T. S. Eliot, and G. K. Chesterton.

Latin-centered classical education is not... vocational training. Its goal is not to turn out efficient workers or satisfied consumers.

Latin-centered classical education is... dedicated to enlightening the mind, refining the senses, and ennobling the spirit. It aims at a life beyond getting and spending. Its goals are the inculcation of virtue and the fostering of wisdom.

Latin-centered classical education is not... student-led. Classical education does not endorse Rousseau's notion that, left to their own devices, children will naturally educate themselves.

Latin-centered classical education is... teacher-led. To achieve its goals, traditional classical education assumes the presence and active involvement of a dedicated teacher who acts not just as a conduit for knowledge but as a role model and mentor. While older students must be encouraged to take increasing responsibility for their learning, the Latin-centered curriculum assumes that teachers can teach *because they know more* than their students.

Latin-centered classical education is not... an uncritical affirmation of pagan beliefs or values.

Latin-centered classical education is... devoted to the Good, the True, and the Beautiful wherever they may be found. It assumes that a thoughtful student will see fit to entertain many ideas without feeling the least compulsion to adopt those that prove unworthy. Constant exposure to the best endows the student with the ability to recognize virtue and vice for what they are.

Latin-centered classical education is not... humanistic in the sense of "irreligious" or "making man the measure of all things."

Latin-centered classical education is... humanistic in the sense that the development of the mind and the refining of the aesthetic sense are worthy activities for creatures that bear the image of God:

To each species of creatures has been allotted a peculiar and instinctive gift. To horses galloping, to birds flying, comes naturally. To man only is given the desire to learn. Hence what the Greeks called paideia, we call studia humanitatis. For learning and training in Virtue are peculiar to man; therefore our forefathers called them Humanitas, the pursuits, the activities proper to mankind. -Renaissance humanist B. Guarino

Drew Campbell is the author of The Latin Centered Curriculum.

On Being a Braveheart

Maybe it's my Scottish blood, but every time I watch *Braveheart* and William Wallace (Mel Gibson) gives his stirring pre-battle speech, I choke up:

Aye, fight and you may die, run, and you'll live... at least for a while. And dying in your beds, many years from now, would you be willin' to trade ALL the days, from this day to that, for one chance, just one chance, to come back here and tell our enemies that they may take our lives, but they'll never take... OUR FREEDOM!

We, as homeschoolers, can respond to this cry just as readily as those Highlanders did. I'm not talking about defending our legal right to educate our children - as important as that is. No, I'm talking about standing up to another tyrant: King Curriculum.

In the few weeks since *The Latin-Centered Curriculum* was published, I've answered dozens of questions from parents eager to adopt this approach in their homes. Naturally I'm thrilled that so many are as excited as I am by the possibilities of classical education. But I want them to do more than adopt the LCC. I want them to adapt it. I want them to stand up to King Curriculum.

Yes, I believe that the program I laid out in the book works. I believe that if you follow it, your children will be prepared for life after homeschool, whether that life includes work, college, military service, homemaking, or all of the above. But I also believe in the wisdom of parents who know their own children and their own circumstances. I believe you can use your mother wit (or paternal perspective, as the case may be) and craft a curriculum that works for your family. And that may not look exactly like the schedules or scope-and-sequence charts you find in *The Latin-Centered Curriculum.*

Maybe you are just bringing your fifth grader home from public school this year. Maybe you have seven children under the age of twelve. Maybe one of your children has a learning disability. Maybe you have a disability. Maybe you hold down a job in addition to homeschooling. Maybe you're afterschooling. Maybe your youngest is a science nut. Maybe your oldest is a budding Olympic athlete. In any of these cases, and a thousand more like them, you will need to adapt this program to your needs - just as you would with any other homeschool curriculum.

I'm going to let you in on a little secret: Even I am adapting the program to my daughter's needs. In fact, my daughter, who is beginning kindergarten on July 5th, will only be following the program exactly as written in two subjects: Copywork and Classical Studies. If even the author has to adapt his own curriculum, no one else need feel nervous about doing the same.

So please do not worry that your child is "behind" if he's beginning Latin in seventh grade or if she doesn't read Homer until high school. Be brave and take heart: Start from where you are, pick up what you can through free reading or during the summer, and move on.

Freedom!

Drew Campbell is the author of The Latin-Centered Curriculum.

LCC: The Reality Edition (Part I)

This is the first in a series of articles from parents sharing "a day in the life" of their LCC homeschools. Enjoy!

Whitney writes:

I have 5 children. My day goes like this:

1) 9:00 Latin forms drill with 7th grader and listen to Latin lesson on the CD (Memoria Press LCI) together. I assign the rest of the Latin lesson and her arithmetic lesson for independent work. Arithmetic is Spectrum Math 7 and some Keys to....series. She also does a Rosetta Stone Spanish lesson. She does it all right away.

2) 5 min Math facts drill (7th and 4th grader)

3) I repeat pretty much the same with my 4th grader who is doing Prima Latina and Spectrum Math 4, but no Spanish. She does her independent work during quiet time.

4) Then 9:30-10 I take my 4th, 3rd, 2nd, and preschooler for a bike ride.
5) We come back and read aloud. We've started reading all the different book suggestions in LCC for Classical, Christian, and Modern Studies starting as low as some of the K suggestions. I hate to skip anything.

6) Then I assign my 2nd & 3rd grader their independent stuff which consists of Spectrum Math, copybook, and reading. I taught them to read using Spell to Read and Write so we also do some phonogram flashcards and worksheets. They do their work until lunch and sometimes during quiet time.

7) Lunch

8) Quiet Time

9) Memory work (Latin chants, new Latin vocab. for week, Artner's guide basic facts, and poetry)

10) Afternoon read aloud of same stuff as morning (7th grader does not participate)

11) Play and sports practices. My kids are heavily involved in sports.

12) PM read aloud in bedrooms before bed. Currently *Blue Book of Fairy Tales* (Lang) for younger set and a Shakespeare storybook for older.

LCC: The Reality Edition (Part II)

Christine Proctor shares her "day in the life" story about a multi-age homeschool that includes friends as well as family.

Am I Latin Centered? This year I've made an effort to be, by moving Latin early with Math, trying to learn it myself, and cutting out R&S English entirely, in favor of Classical Writing. It was a step in that direction when I realized I could do more multi-age teaching, and even fold in more children in the process.

Here was our Tuesday. Everyone was up and dressed by 9:00 when our extra kids arrived. (On Monday and Tuesday we have two more students - 3rd and 6th grade sisters.) We all sat down at the tables in the school room and began math. My oldest son (5th grade) was waiting for his math lesson so he began translating a page from his Latin for Children reader while I started with the 3rd graders. My 1st grader was doing three pages of his Explode the Code just to finish it out while I started our math off. I rotated through the six kids and kept a dialogue up with my translator son who was quite proud since he did it all without help. Math finished up and several students slipped off to read their literature books.

After a short break we all returned for Latin. Today I had all the groups together and we played a game from Latin for Children. We kept track of points and tossed some candy bars about - and had fun reviewing our Latin vocabulary from the last few weeks. Normally I have two Latin groups. I start one group on their lesson on DVD and then go get the other one started. Then I spend a little time with each group as they do their assignments and chants. Often we'll get together and have each group chant for the other group. Today we were winding down for the year, though. Our DVD for group one died and we're waiting for the new one in the mail so I'm reviewing declensions and the different cases. My 10-year-old wants to go faster. Yesterday we were translating sentences Latin to English and English to Latin and trying to pick the proper declensions for the nouns etc. It was right on for the lower group and too easy for my 5th grader - thus the translating exercise he did on his own. When I finish my own Latin education this summer I hope to be able to make it more my class and not need the DVDs so much, but that is just how it is at the moment.

Latin was done, and we had a great review. We went into a quick game simulating the Stock Market and read aloud a chapter from Story of the World 4 dealing with stocks. The older kids were given a chance to pick their own stock to follow for the week.

Lunch - We read from *Pagoo* by Holling C. Holling, and we continued working through the Old Testament.

Recess â€“ Mom finally ate a bit of lunch and then our Classical Writing kids arrived.

Yesterday during Classical Writing, each group put on an impromptu play of the story they were rewriting. They were such fun to watch. A lion was roaring as a mouse chewed his ropes to free him, and Allen-a-Dale was fretting over his cancelled wedding. Today I rotated through the lower Aesop A group, the upper Aesop A group and the Aesop B group. I don't know how I ended up with three groups, but next year I'm trying for two. Since school is only going for a week and a half more I let the groups play outside while waiting their turn to meet with me and do their work. We did dictation in each group today, and continued our analysis of the stories. The upper Aesop group is working on prepositional phrases, and they turned in their final story copies from the previous work. They are excited about rewriting William Tell and are already planning a play to perform for the other kids. The bow and arrow sitting outside the kitchen will be put to good use. The beginning Aesop group has a first grader who is still meticulously working on his Princess and the Pea. He is almost done and totally proud of his work. I cannot wait to help him get his quotation marks in place and print it out. We are creating a class book and will hand them out in a couple of weeks. Each family will have a copy of everyone's stories. We are a kind of interesting homeschool since I plug other kids into what my kids are doing. The parents are thrilled - they don't know Latin and they feel insecure about teaching writing. I'm thrilled because my kids are in heaven working away with friends nearby.

I finish up meeting with the CW kids and plan out what they will finish up during the rest of the week. The kids are off to play in the sun, and I'm about to drag two of them off to the dentist.

The most interesting part of this Latin Centered idea, though, is that I am learning Latin. I spent a good half hour at breakfast with my books spread across the table, and the night before I was working away as the kids went to bed. Often now when I'm doing the dishes, the laptop has LfC B DVDs playing and I try to cement what I'm doing. I find the children's chants so helpful for me. It is better than the dry book. I never knew I was so auditory. My 4-year-old came in and told me, "I was saying that *ba, bas, bat* thing on the playground, Mom."

LCC: The Reality Edition (Part III)

*This "day in the life" comes from Heather at **Culloden House Farms**, homeschooling mother of three. Thanks, Heather, for "keeping it real"!*

Our main plans for today are to do school, pay bills, write the grocery list, finish mowing the front yard, weed the garden, and go out tonight with Hubby. It's his normal game night, but we haven't seen much of him and we'll be eating dinner together, then I'll drop him off at the gaming store and do some grocery shopping with the kiddos. It'll be a late night, so I'm letting the boys sleep in.

7:00 Hit the snooze and sleep until 7:20.

7:20 Get up, get Hubby ready for work (lay out his clothes and sit and talk while he gets ready).

8:00 Hubby is out the door, I wake Mary up, then hit the shower.

8:25 Showers are done, rooms are clean, beds are made. Mary fixes our breakfast while I check email.

8:45 We eat and discuss the plans for the day.

9:05 Mary is supposed to be reading her story Bible, but is dancing around the living room to her favorite Celtic band. I put in a load of wash.

9:15 I remind her to start reading, she relucantly begins. I sit down to pay bills.

9:25 Ian comes downstairs.

9:40 Finished bills, Ian is eating breakfast. I check on Mary's reading progress and start on the grocery list.

9:50 Mary finishes reading, then starts whining when I tell her to get her Latin books. Evidently she doesn't feel like doing her copywork today. I send her to get them anyway. Ian is whining that he doesn't like his breakfast and wants something else.

10:00 Alex isn't awake yet and Mary is still up in her room, so I head upstairs to see what's going on.

10:15 Alex is up and sort of dressed (his pants are in the dryer, but he has on boxers) and eating breakfast. Mary has finally settled down to do her Latin. Ian still isn't finished with his breakfast yet, but he's stopped whining.

10:25 The grocery list is finished, the boys are driving cars around the kitchen and Mary is still doing Latin.

10:45 Mary finally finishes Latin, after stopping to play at least 3 times. The grocery list is finished. I go to do phonics with the boys.

11:00 We correct Mary's Latin while the boys play a computer game. Then Mary reads to me for a few minutes.

11:20 Playtime! I go fold laundry, in between kissing boo-boos.

11:45 The kids clean up downstairs while I make lunch. Mary puts in a load of dishes and sweeps the kitchen. Ian straightens the family room and vaccums. Alex takes all the toys to the basement. I direct them for about 5 minutes, until everyone gets going on their task.

12:15 Check chores, then lunch.

12:40 Lunch is over and we get ready to go outside. It looks like rain, so we need to get things done quickly.

1:15 The rain hit, so we had to come in. I got the mowing done, but not much else. We are getting cleaned up and ready for reading time. The boys are watching the tail end of *Jimmy Neutron.*

1:30 Time for our read aloud. I will read for about twenty minutes, then we'll have about a half hour of resting time/free reading.

3:00 Reading time got a bit out of control (I just can't stop them when Mary is reading a zoo book to the boys and teaching them about the different animals), so we are having play time while I make some calls and get some business done.

4:00 We finally start formal school! First recitation (Latin, Greek, math), then a Greek lesson for Mary. She is starting to translate simple Greek sentences, so I introduce the concept of diagramming. We learned about parsing when we

started with Latin sentences, so it seemed appropriate to cover the next thing.

4:45 I hand Mary some math problems and tackle Copybook with Ian.

5:00 I assign Mary her Spencerian copybook assignment, and go to get the boys ready to leave.

5:15 We clean up any outstanding messes and go outside to wait for Hubby.

We are currently reading *The Magician's Nephew* as our read aloud. I consider that to be literature study and modern history study (England in the late Victorian period). We are on a hiatus from CW and D'Aulaires', but we will pick back up on those in the next couple weeks.

Weight of Liberty, Freedom of Form

I remember the moment in which I realized one of the great perks of signing on to a particular educational philosophy: I didn't need to worry about curriculum that was clearly not in line with that philosophy. I don't have to look at products that promote "critical thinking skills" for second graders; we do Latin now and will do traditional logic later. I can pass by English grammar and literature comprehension guides for picture books; we do our Latin and read **Good Books** for pleasure and discovery. I don't need to bother with "creative writing" programs; we have the *progymnasmata.*

But parents standing overwhelmed in the middle of the vendor hall at their local homeschool convention are not the only ones to benefit when we say "yes" to some things and, as a consequence, "no" to others. Our children are freed from the confines of too much choice.

How's that again? Too much choice? Our consumer-driven society sees that phrase as oxymoronic, but a few voices **here** and **there** ask us to question the marketplace and all its glamours. I would add to their critique the notion that, in the marketplace of ideas, we would also do well to limit our choices - for our own sakes and for our children's.

The great philosophers, writers, scientists, artists, and theologians of the past were not set free with a blank piece of paper and told to express themselves. They were not expected to reinvent mathematics, grammar, painting, or faith in the classroom. When they innovated, they did so with a sure knowledge of their field and a masterful control of their tools that assured that the new ground they cleared would be fruitful and not just a mass of rock over which later generations would stumble. Where they plowed and sowed, we now reap.

Sometimes I hear homeschoolers opine that the classical curriculum is too rigid, too prescriptive. I can only shake my head and direct them to Wordsworth:

> Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room;
> And hermits are contented with their cells;
> And students with their pensive citadels;
> Maids at the wheel, the weaver at his loom,
> Sit blithe and happy; bees that soar for bloom,
> High as the highest Peak of Furness-fells,
> Will murmur by the hour in foxglove bells;
> In truth the prison, into which we doom
> Ourselves, no prison is: and hence for me,
> In sundry moods, 't was pastime to be bound
> Within the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground;
> Pleased if some Souls (for which there needs must be)
> Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,
> Should find brief solace there, as I have found.

Of Diligence and Delight

What associations do these words and phrases conjure up?

· rote learning
· summer school
· oratory

And what would you say if I told you that I had spent this morning with my five-year-old daughter, Julia, engaged in these activities? If you're like many parents – even classically inclined ones – the words "slave driver" might pop into your head!

Now what if I described for you the following scenario:

A proud mother looks on expectantly as the kindergartner prepares. On the floor in front of the little girl are two pieces of silk, one yellow, one blue. In her hand she holds a wooden spoon. She smiles, and glancing quickly at her father for reassurance, kneels down and begins to "dig" in the yellow silk with the spoon as she recites:

"When I was down beside the sea/A wooden spade they gave to me/To dig the sandy shore…"

What about Latin? Yes, I am teaching my kindergartner Latin, and without any prior formal study of English grammar on her part. How? Listen in again on one of our lessons:

"A noun's the name of anything
as, school or garden, hoop or swing.
Adjectives tell the kind of noun,
as, great, small, pretty, white or brown…"

Most days, we work with flash cards and chant grammar forms. Julia completes the exercises in her student book or writes out a declension. Today, to help her master a few tricky vocabulary words, I pulled out a small stack of flash cards and gave her a pile of plain copy paper and her crayons.

"All right. *Gaudium.* What does that mean again?" I asked. Blank look. "*Gaudium* means 'joy.' What can you draw that makes you think of *gaudium*?" A few minutes later she had drawn a colorful picture of a bride in a wedding dress, festooned with hearts and flowers, and the word *gaudium* in big, bright letters across the top. All told, she drew a dozen "vocabulary portraits," including pictures for a few rather abstract words like *locus* (place).

Did Julia know that that her crayon drawings are kin to a **classical memory method** pioneered by the ancient Greeks and developed by St. Thomas Aquinas? Of course not. All she knows is that she spent part of the morning coloring and that she now remembers what those pesky second-declension nouns mean.

Too often those of us who had less-than-satisfying school careers assume that all learning must be like what we experienced: tedious and mind-numbing (and those were the new, "progressive" methods!). We shake our heads and murmur about "pushy parents" and "letting children be children." We think that dusty old classical methods like recitation must be deadly dull. We assume that a young child who is studying classical languages or memorizing gobs of poetry must be a sort of latter-day Bob Cratchit, chained to a desk in a dark, drafty room under the beady eye of a crabbed and heartless Scrooge. Visions of birch switches dance in our heads.

In contrast, we talk about "delight-directed" learning and "learning as a lifestyle." We acknowledge that healthy children actually enjoy learning, and that, to a certain extent, they will do it, with or without us. To be sure – and contrary to many a cheerful classroom poster – learning is not always "fun." It is not the bread and circuses of the mass media and the marketplace, frenetic entertainment meant to stupify us into further mindless consumption. It is not all cartoons and sugar candy, Xboxes and iPods.

But neither should learning – even the much-derided seat work and rote memorization – be thought synonymous with drudgery. That is our prejudice, not our children's. If my daughter knows the meaning of *gaudium* today, it is not because I told her, but because I was able to direct her to the experience.

For at its best, classical learning is delight directed. The teacher delights in the subject matter and in the student's efforts and accomplishments. In turn, the student begins to delight in challenge, in the rewards of diligence, and in the sheer pleasure of discovery. May we all delight in our children and take joy in the opportunity to hand on the gift of learning.

Drew Campbell is the author of The Latin-Centered Curriculum. *He lives in western Massachusetts where he diligently homeschools his delightful daughter, Julia.*

The Pearl at the Center

"Why do you want your children to read literature in the original Latin or Greek?"

On one level, we can answer this common question with an Italian proverb: *Traduttore, traditore* -- every translation is a betrayal. A Japanese person reading Shakespeare in translation may well understand plots and character development, but can she be said really to understand Shakespeare's artistry without access to his language? The same is true of the classical literary masters: Homer, Virgil, Cicero.

As Tracy Lee Simmons writes, "the problem with translations is that those readers unlettered in the original languages can't know what they're missing."

*A translation seems as the shadow of a tree to the tree itself, and the discerning mind will not confuse one for the other. Much of the power and the glory no longer shine within the poem that's been run through the enervating sieve of translation. Something leaks out. Unfortunately that something is often the very essence that once drove centuries of readers to the poem. We lack that which made it great. We've lost the pearl at the center. (*Climbing Parnassus*, pp. 218-219)*

While I can understand the concern of parents who are trying to decide whether it's worth their students' time to master these complex and often frustrating languages, I am dismayed by an assumption that I seem to see lurking beneath the question. Perhaps this presupposition is not, in fact, what drives these parents, but I've seen too many discussions of this sort to think that it is entirely absent from our collective educational consciousness.

That assumption is that classical languages -- and, by association, any challenging academic subject -- are something that no child in his right mind would ever want to learn. It's as if we teach Latin for the same reason we eat oat bran or take cod liver oil: It's Good for You. Nasty stuff, but healthful, so we choke it down.

Now I'm a big proponent of the formative value of a curriculum that emphasizes the classical languages. Mental discipline is a fine thing; I'm all for it. But this isn't boot camp, even if our grammar chants can sound a bit like marching cadences. Why on earth would you have your children memorize heaps of Latin grammar but stop before they actually get to read any real Latin literature? It's like having a child do nothing but scales and arpeggios on the piano, but making him quit before he ever gets to "Fuer Elise." He'll have good hand-eye coordination and a certain amount of technical knowledge about key signatures and such, but I can guarantee that he won't become a competent pianist, let alone love music. I'm convinced this is why so many people think Latin is deadly dull: they dropped out before they got to the good stuff. Caesar may be many things, but I wouldn't call him boring.

The assumption -- anti-intellectual at base -- that classical learning is anything but pleasurable spawns a chilling monster: the homeschooler who teaches the classics because they're Good and Uplifting, but without once ever enjoying them or conveying that enjoyment to her children. Yes, classical languages are good for you and there are many enduring truths to be found in the literature of the Greeks and Romans, but we mustn't forget the third part of the great classical paradigm: Beauty. People haven't read Virgil for centuries because he exhibited mental rigor but because his poetry is supremely beautiful. We can't separate that loveliness from the language in which it is clothed. And so we chant our forms and look forward to the day that our children will "sing of arms and a man."

Drew Campbell is the author of The Latin-Centered Curriculum. *This is the second in a series of articles on the pleasures of classics; the first part can be found* ***here****.*

Why Latin?: 10 Answers to a Perennial Question

Let's get back to basics: What is it about Latin, anyway? Why privilege this "dead" language over other subjects? Why spend so much time on something that probably won't help your students earn a higher salary or win friends and influence people?

The simple answer is that if you want to give your children a classical education, you have to teach them classical languages -- that's what makes it a *classical* education in the first place. Without classical languages, you may have an excellent modern liberal arts program, but you won't have a classical education in any historically meaningful sense of the word. (See *Climbing Parnassus* and *The Great Tradition* to get a picture of what that "historically meaningful sense" is.)

But a devotion to tradition and the example of our forefathers and -mothers isn't enough to convince most homeschoolers, and I don't blame them. For many of us, it's hard to trust that what worked for generations and generations will still help our children succeed in today's world. Haven't things changed? Don't we have different educational needs now?

Yes and no. Yes, we need to study disciplines that, by their very nature, change over time, such as history and science. And many of us are bound by governmental standards that require us to teach certain subjects if we want to continue to homeschool.

But has human nature--the capacity of the human mind and spirit--changed all that much? No. If anything, our spirits have shrunk. We're so mired in our own chronological snobbery that we don't even know to ask how this intellectual malaise developed and what we might do to remedy it.

And that is why Latin and Greek are still valuable. Students still need to have their minds stretched and their spirits enlightened. They need to memorize and then apply, systematically, what they have learned. They need to develop self-discipline, attention to detail, and delayed gratification. They need positive models of nobility of spirit and negative examples of cowardice and cruelty in order to recognize these virtues and vices in their world and in themselves. They need the self-esteem that comes from accomplishing something challenging by their own effort -- and we must admit that reading Latin s supremely effortful. Finally, we as parent-educators need to be able to echo what one Spartan educator said: "I make noble things pleasant to children."

That's all well and good. High-sounding ideas are lovely, but what about *my kids?* So for busy homeschoolers and interested others, here are ten reasons to put classical languages at the center of your curriculum:

1. Latin builds English vocabulary like no other language--not even Anglo-Saxon. More than half of all English words derive from Latin (and another large chunk from Greek), and what's more, these are the $10 words. As a result, students of Latin routinely outperform students of all other foreign languages on the SATs.

2. Latin prepares students for the study of modern foreign languages. The Romance languages derive 90% or more of their vocabulary from Latin, and students of inflected languages like Russian or German will benefit from the training Latin provides.

3. Latin teaches grammar far more effectively than any English curriculum. This claim astounds and confounds many homeschoolers, but you need only look at the masters of English style from the Renaissance onward and ask what they all had in common. The answer: They did not study English, a subject not even available in their grammar schools, but Latin. Lots and lots and lots of Latin. The same was true of their counterparts in other countries. Think about it this way: You can teach English grammar, and your child knows English grammar. Or you can teach Latin, and your child knows Latin...and gets English grammar as a bonus.

4. Latin trains students in valuable habits of mind: memory, order, attention to detail. As one example in *Climbing Parnassus*shows, it takes no less than fourteen separate steps to translate a short Latin sentence--to say nothing of Virgil.

5. Latin translation provides admirable training in English composition. In addition to mastering the grammatical exigencies of the language, students of Latin must learn to choose words with care. They are encouraged to understand and imitate the beautifully balanced sentences of stylists like Cicero. They learn to appreciate the brevity of the Latin maxim and proverb. Again, some of the English language's greatest writers cut their teeth on Latin composition exercises, not English.

6. Latin study increases our knowledge of the past and of our own history. It is quite impossible to study Latin without delving into classical history. What is a "gladiator"? (If you know the meaning of the common second-declension noun *gladius,* you'll have an important clue.) Who is Caesar? What is an aqueduct and why were they built? What's more, this history is our history, the history of the West. We cannot understand the roots of our own government, legal system, or religious traditions without reference to Rome.

7. Latin study increases cultural literacy. European vernacular literature, art, and music take for granted a knowledge of classical languages and history. Dante, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Goethe, Keats, and the rest --there is no understanding them without a thorough grounding in Greco-Roman mythology, literature, and history. And that is to say nothing of the rich traditions of Christian Latin: theology, religious poetry, liturgy, and the musical delights of Gregorian chant, Mozart's "Requiem," and the countless Masses and Oratorios that crowd our classical music playlists.

8. Latin literature and history offer outstanding models of moral insight and virtue--and their opposites. The classical world first codified the great virtues of prudence, temperance, justice, and courage. Keeping before the student the "habitual vision of greatness" inspires and uplifts the mind and spirit toward the Good, while examples of perfidy and cruelty stir up our sense of justice and the desire to defend the innocent.

9. Latin provides us with a lifetime's worth of reading. A person who has sojourned with the ancients as a child may well find himself returning to them again and again throughout life, for their wisdom is undimmed by age--theirs, or ours.

10. Latin is, quite simply, beautiful. At its best, Latin is a model of ordered, polished, and balanced language. It is a pleasure to read, to write, to sing, and even to speak.

If you've chosen to teach Latin, and particularly if you're placing it at the center of your curriculum, it's only a matter of time until someone asks you,"Why Latin?" May you never lack for answers!

Why Not Latin?

Classics - the study of classical languages, history, and culture - are the defining factor of a classical education. That is, they are what makes an education *classical* in the first place, as opposed to a modern liberal arts education or vocational training. However, I would never go so far as to say that an education without Latin is not worth having. There *are* reasons not to teach Latin, or not to teach it from an early age with the goal of reading literature in the original. For the sake of balance, I'd like to share what I understand as some of those reasons.

But before I do, I should come clean and say that, anti-relativist zealot that I am, I don't believe that every reason I've heard is equally valid. "It's boring" and "it's hard" are not legitimate reasons to avoid Latin. Math is boring to some students and not a few find it difficult, but we wouldn't consider ejecting math from the curriculum on those grounds. Better to be honest and say, "I can't be bothered" or "I'm intimidated by Latin" or whatever the real reason is. After all, there are no Roman legions on the march who will come and force you or your kids to decline *mensa* at spearpoint!

That said, here are the valid reasons I can see for families choosing not to study Latin:

1. Latin does not fit into the parents' philosophy of education. This assumes, of course, that the parents have thought carefully about their vision of an educated person and that they use that vision as a touchstone to determine which subjects and curricula are suitable for *their* children in *their* homeschool. Some parents object to a focus on classical materials on religious grounds; others view education primarily as a means to paid employment; still others refuse to ask a child to study anything that isn't immediately appealing to the child himself. Obviously this covers a very wide swath of the homeschooling world: the overwhelming majority, in fact. Some may overlook Latin out of ignorance of its benefits, but many others have heard the call and replied, "No, thanks." Fair enough. One may argue about the relative merits of different pedagogies, but at the end of the day, we parents have the final say. And that's exactly as it should be.

2. The parents do not have the time or inclination to learn Latin themselves nor the resources to outsource this particular subject to others who have the necessary skills. There are lots of wonderful Latin curricula out there that make the language accessible to teachers who haven't studied it before. Still, I have yet to see one that is truly self-teaching, and it would be a remarkable child indeed who could take herself from *amo, amas, amat* to reading Vergil with no outside help. The rest of us need a teacher. For most homeschoolers, that will be a parent who either knows some Latin or who is willing to study in advance of, or at least alongside, the most advanced student in the family. If that's not possible, tutors, classes, and co-ops provide alternatives.

3. The student is struggling with basic literacy or has other pressing needs. Here we are talking about children with modest learning delays, children with major physical or developmental disabilities, and many in between. Some children may benefit from a later start in Latin, while others need to focus exclusively on basic skills. Learning to speak, read, and write one's native language adequately takes precedence over Latin. If ASL is your child's first language, it takes precedence over Latin, as it does for other members of the family. If your child needs therapy or intensive coaching to function in social situations, deal with sensory integration issues, handle basic self-care, etc., all this takes precedence over Latin. It doesn't mean that such children cannot learn Latin at all, but it may be that a full-scale traditional Latin-centered curriculum is not the best choice for them. If you're in this situation, God bless you, and please don't worry overmuch about Latin.

4. The parents value Latin but do not choose to make it the center of the curriculum. The question here is not "Latin, yea or nay?" but how much and when. This is the perspective of many neoclassical homeschoolers. They're not out to save Western civilization from certain doom; they just want a solid, modern liberal arts program for their children, preferably one that will get the kids into a decent college or career. In this group we also find people who want to expand their children's English vocabulary, improve their standardized test scores, or give them a few years of a foreign language on their high school transcripts. For them, Latin is one option among many: roots programs, vocabulary curricula, modern languages. There is even one military academy I've heard about that insists on a modern language and won't accept Latin credits toward their foreign language requirement. If your child's dearest wish is to attend that academy, and there is not time in the student's schedule for both, then it would be foolish to teach Latin to the total exclusion of a modern language. My motto remains: "Any Latin is better than no Latin!"

When all is said and done, the truth is that most homeschoolers fall into one of the above categories. And that's okay. As much as I love Latin and think the world would be a better place if more people studied it, I accept that it is unlikely to regain its former position as *the* basic subject. Failing that, I hope to get the word out that Latin remains a valuable subject--far more valuable than many people realize. But if you're going to do it, know why. Don't teach Latin because the cool kids on the block are doing it. Teach it because you believe it to be a subject worthy of your children's time,

attention, and effort. If you walk that talk, and your child works hard, your family will enjoy the benefits--and the pleasures--of Latin. *Excelsior!*

Drew Campbell is the author of The Latin-Centered Curriculum. *He and his family of Latin zealots live in western Massachusetts. "We recruit!"*

Dropping the H-Bomb

Most of us know enough to avoid earthy, four-letter Anglo-Saxon words in polite company. But who would think that saying the word *humanism* could have the same effect in some Christian circles? Why such hostility to a word that many of us struggle even to define clearly?

On the surface, the reason is understandable. "Humanism" is often used as a shorthand for atheistic secularism, a worldview that makes man the measure of all things. Understood in this way, humanism is the sin of idolatry turned into an ideology, and it is easy to see why Christians of all backgrounds would shun it.

But is this what classical educators mean when they talk about "humanism"? Why is it that the publishers of the Henle Latin series describe the goal of Fr. Henle's course as "humanistic insight and linguistic training"? And what does all this have to do with "the humanities" or what David Hicks, in *Norms and Nobility,* refers to as "the Humane Letters"?

Listen to the words of one Christian humanist of the Renaissance:

> *"To each species of creatures has been allotted a peculiar and instinctive gift. To horses galloping, to birds flying, comes naturally. To man only is given the desire to learn. Hence what the Greeks called paideia, we call studia humanitatis. For learning and training in Virtue are peculiar to man; therefore our forefathers called them Humanitas, the pursuits, the activities proper to mankind." -B. Guarino*

Just as liberal arts are those studies that are appropriate to free persons and that free our minds from ignorance, humanistic studies are those subjects that are appropriate to human beings and that humanize us. They prevent of from becoming, in C. S. Lewis'swords, mere trousered apes. Far from being in opposition to religious faith, they help us fulfill the Lord's commandment to love Him with our whole mind. So it should come as little surprise that the most ancient Christian communities have treasured and transmitted humanistic learning - including that of pre-Christian, classical writers - as evidence that whatever is True and Good and Beautiful in human thought can only have its origin in the ultimate source of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty.

So we find that the Eastern Churches venerate the Three Hierarchs - known as the Cappadocian Fathers in the West - as patron saints of learning and educational values. As **Demetrios J. Constantelos** explains:

> *"The teachings of the Three Hierarchs derived from the Bible and the Greek classics, because the object of both is the formation of the perfect human person, indeed the salvation, the theosis, of the human being. The Greek philosophers emphasized virtue, spiritual freedom, character. The practice of philosophical training and ascesis was the elevation of the human to the godly, (philosophia esti omoiosis theo kata to dynaton anthropos). People like the Three Church Fathers brought together the best of antiquity with the best of the new faith.*
>
> *"By emphasizing the value of the Greek Classics, the Fathers acknowledged that there are many steps by which man ascends to the abode of truth, even though it is not an easy process to reach the climax. There are values in many schools of thought, and wisdom is not the monopoly of any one system. But in Greek thought and in Christianity there are two very rich inheritances which include values of tried worth - they are not conservative or static but galvanized values which have endured the trials of time and proven worthy of retention. The Three Hierarchs were not afraid to test everything which claimed even seeds of truth, for they believed that 'Wherever good is to be found is a property of the truth' as Socrates Scholastikos, the Church historian writes.*
>
> *"The question is, why was it necessary for the Three Hierarchs to reconcile the old heritage with the new faith? Why was it so necessary for the Church to place so much emphasis on the importance of Greek thought and learning in the Christian tradition?* ***In simple terms, the Christian community considered the achievements of the ancient Greek mind as propaedeutic for the Christian faith, as providential and as a divine gift.****" (emphasis added)*

Likewise, in the West, Christians grappled with how to handle ancient sources in light of the faith. Guided by the Church Fathers of East and West, they ultimately refused the wholesale rejection of the past and instead developed a balanced approach to classical learning:

> *"Now I meet an objection. You will be confronted by the opposition of the shallow Churchman. 'Why waste precious time studying such sources of corruption as the pagan poets?' They will quote Cicero and Plato, Jerome and Boethius, and will cry out for banishment of the very names of the ancient poets from the soil of your country. To this your answer can only be: 'If this tirade indeed represents the serious opinion of my people, I can but shake off the dust from my feet and bid farewell to a land shrouded in darkness so appalling.' [...] Nay, the Fathers themselves, Jerome, Augustine, Cyprian, did not hesitate to draw*

> *illustrations from heathen poetry and so sanctioned its study. [...] Finally, it is enough to remember that Paul the Apostle availed himself of Epimenides or Menander to enforce a doctrine. Is not this a sufficiently strong position: 'You despise Paul's authority; can you ask us then to respect yours?' [...]*
>
> *"The crucial question is: how do you use your authors? Basil has left us a clear guidance on the matter: we leave on one side their beliefs and superstitions, their false ideas of happiness, their defective standard of morals; we welcome all they can render in praise of integrity and in condemnation of vice...* ***Herein is laid down an admirable principle by which we may be guided in reading all authors of antiquity. Wherever excellence is commended, whether by poet, historian, or philosopher, we may safely welcome their aid in building up the character.****" - Aeneas Sylvius (Pope Pius II) (emphasis added)*

This principle remains in force; the current *Catechism of the Catholic Church* does not hesitate to quote Cicero on natural law and reason (**Â§ 1956**), and certain educational movements within the Church (e.g., Ignatian education) have long made the close study of worthy classical material central to their curriculum. This is Christian humanism at its most developed.

Nor was classical learning rejected by the Reformers and those who followed in their footsteps. From Martin Luther to Jonathan Edwards to modern Christian apologists like C. S. Lewis and Dorothy Sayers, humanistic studies have been a valued part of Christian intellectual formation.

If this approach of our spiritual forefathers is sound, then we may safely eject the bathwater without sacrificing the baby in the process. We need not reinvent the educational wheel nor reject the Greco-Roman roots of our educational heritage in favor of so-called Hebrew methods. We need not create false dichotomies between "Latin-centered" education and "Christ-centered"education. To do so is to confuse means with ends. A Latin-centered education is not an end in itself, but undertaken in the light of faith, it may serve as one means to a Christ-centered life. Its humanism is not that of scientism or atheism, but that of the Fathers of the Church herself.

Drew Campbell is the author of The Latin-Centered Curriculum.

Ordering Knowledge to the Child's Nature

There is no doubt that the idea of "child-directed learning" would have struck the ancients as laughable: how can you entrust education to someone who, by definition, doesn't know what he needs to know? Classical education has always been directed toward the adult the child will one day become, not to his current immaturity.

What's more, orthodox Christians acknowledge that our nature - that which **Rousseau** and his intellectual heirs would elevate to a formative principle - has been wounded by the Fall. We simply cannot accept the premise that, left to her own devices, a child will make wise education choices based on her natural desires and interests alone. That is why Catholic thought has not supported child-directed educational philosophies - **quite the opposite**.

So does that mean that we should program our child's education from start to finish? Is there any role for freedom in education?

Where there is logical progression of facts and skills to be mastered, as is the case with the core LCC subjects, **Latin and math**, we allow student direction at our (and their!) peril. While some exceptional students may "discover" mathematical principles on their own, unless your family speaks Latin at home, they are unlikely to internalize the Latin grammar without systematic instruction. In other subjects, however, we can and should make use of the child's natural curiosity. Where do the geese go in the winter? Why does my nose run when I have a cold? Why does it snow? The natural sciences are the proper arena for human curiosity - that is, in fact, the basis of the scientific method. "What if...?" is a deeply human question, and one we can encourage in our children. Likewise, curiosity about the past is a natural outgrowth of a child's broadening awareness. Just as science asks questions of the future - "What *will* happen if...?" - history asks questions of the past: "Why are things the way they are now? How did they get that way?"

The answers to timeless questions - What is 2+2? What is the genitive singular form of "anima"? - require systematic instruction. Questions that arise from the child's sense of past and future may be more safely thrown open to natural curiosity. But we are still left with the responsibility to guide our children's understanding of the discoveries they make. If we can trace the projectile of a bottle rocket using the principles of physics, does that give us leave to shoot it off in a crowd?

The answer to that question comes from ethics, and there we must discern our child's maturity. A young child will simply be told "no, not safe." An older child can be guided - through that method of Socratic dialogue that every parent uses - to understand why. Here we are using the child's natural curiosity ("what would happen if...") while disciplining the will to obey reason, not passion (i.e., impulse or desire). This is something responsible parents do every day - all day, every day, it seems!

So freedom, yes, but within limits. We may legitimately use methods of discovery, both empirical and Socratic, to educate our children where those methods are proper to the field of endeavor. We must use didactic methods in disciplines where they are appropriate. But we must never substitute the child's nature, his free will, for a wise teacher. We cannot abandon our responsibility to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, including the natural orders of knowledge and authority that God has ordained.

Drew Campbell educates his very curious daughter at home. You can read more about the family's educational adventures at his personal blog, **Running River Latin School**.

Demythologizing Myth

What are we to do about those pesky Greek myths? The violence, the immorality...why exactly are we studying these stories again?

The "why" is simple enough: the myths, Greek, Roman, and Norse, form the foundation of so much later literature, art, and music, that to neglect them is to risk ignorance of some of the greatest cultural artifacts of the West. Besides, read in their proper context, the myths are fascinating in their own right, even when - perhaps particularly when - they bring us up against a very foreign worldview.

It's the "how" that poses the greater difficulty. The **Greek myth curriculum** I recommend treats the myths straighforwardly, familiarizing students with the content of the most important Greek stories. But even if students know that the myths are "good for them," that they will open doors to later literature, they may still wonder why we need to read stories that are, admittedly, gruesome at times. And when faced with child-devouring fathers and nightmarish monsters, parents may wonder what happened to the Good, the True, and the Beautiful, those ideals that classical education upholds.

I'd like to offer some background on the myths that may help parents teach them more effectively - and, in the process, correct some common misunderstandings about the role of myth in ancient cultures.

First, there are some common themes in European mythologies from India all the way to Ireland - a sky god identified as "father"; a war between two families of gods, a battle with a snake or sea serpent, etc. These reach down to a common substratum of Indo-European culture. What's important for kids to know is that the Greeks (for example) did not invent their myths out of whole cloth. They inherited much from their cultural ancestors and then modified the myths to fit their current environment. Students who study Greek, Roman, and Norse myths, as I suggest, will begin to recognize these themes.

Second, the purpose of most myths is to explain some facet of human life, the environment, or tradition. They attempt to answer the perennial questions: Why is there suffering? Where does the rain come from? What are my obligations to my family, my neighbors, my tribe? The actions of the gods, which can seem so gratuitous to us, must be seen in that context.

Third, language matters. Unless you understand Greek, some of the resonances in myth may be lost. The name Kronos, for example, sounds very much like the Greek word for time, Chronos. In the story of Kronos swallowing his children, it is Time that, figuratively, swallows all things. That's also why Saturn, Kronos's Roman counterpart, is usually portrayed as an old man, "Father Time." The war between the Titans and the Olympians is a battle between the brute forces of Earth (the Titans are the earth mother Gaia's children) and the forces of civilization. Many of the more horrifying monsters are personifications of destructive natural or social forces. Becoming aware of these details can help children put the violent or grotesque aspects of the myths into context.

Fourth, it is not safe to assume that the myths were understood by all the ancients in the same way. Plato would have banned the poets from his ideal city (described in the *Republic*) because he felt they told unworthy tales about the gods. Most educated people did not take the myths literally; they understood them as metaphors or as "true falsehoods" - stories that, while not factual, nevertheless conveyed some truth about life. Undoubtedly there were many people who viewed them very simply and superstitiously, but the authors you'll find on Great Books lists most assuredly did not.

Fifth, the relationship between myth and actual Greek religious practice is not always clear. Some myths exist solely to explain some obscure religious tradition, the actual origins of which were long forgotten. (Plutarch has a whole book dedicated to investigating these historical oddities.) For this reason, it is well worth reading a **simple book on Greek religious practices** alongside the myths. No, their practices weren't always palatable to modern sensibilities, but neither were those practices appreciably different from those of other ancient cultures, including the Hebrews.

Finally, it's important for students to understand that the ancient view of the gods was very different from the Judeo-Christian understanding of God. The gods of mythology were not "holy" in the sense of "all good" - they were simply another class of beings with different rules. Aristotle says point-blank, "No one loves Zeus." The goal of religious practice was not to become like the gods but to take one's proper, subordinate place in a relationship of mutual exchange or reciprocal favor. Humans provided offerings; for their part, the gods were expected to provide fair weather, abundant crops, success in war, safe childbirth, and all the other good things of life. We should not make the mistake of assuming that the behavior of the gods in the myths was set up as a model of acceptable behavior for the ancients themselves. *"Quod licet Jovi non licet bovi":* What is permissible for Jove isn't permissible for cattle. There are some myths that specifically portray moral behavior for humans, such as the story of Baucis and Philemon, which praises hospitality, or the story of Arachne, which shows the dangers of pride. But for the most part, the myths explain reality in figurative language. They are not meant to be morality plays.

By placing the myths in their historical and cultural context, we can begin to understand the role they played for the ancients. And we can perhaps see that the images the ancients used have great potential to speak across the ages - potential that has been realized in some of the West's greatest works of art. I am not suggesting that we try to instill ancient social codes in our children through the study of myth or that we must tacitly approve of all we read to be "classically correct." What we can do is invite our children to step outside of their chronological comfort zone to see how another highly civilized people thought about the world and the human condition. It's a step we parent-teachers should also take now and again. Our homeschools will be the better for it.

*Drew Campbell is the author of*The Latin-Centered Curriculum. *He has a keen interest in cross-cultural myth studies.*

"Let nothing disturb you; let nothing frighten you"

I tend to take a live-and-let-live approach to homeschooling philosophies. I assume that families are different, kids are different, and no one method will work all the time with all kids. Not even LCC. ;)

But I do expect people to do their homework. If they're going to argue against a particular philosophy, they should be knowledgeable enough about it to go beyond stereotypes and generalizations. When a homeschooler - or worse, a homeschool author or publisher - says they don't support Latin-centered education because "you have to teach more than Latin," I know they haven't done their homework. They are simply misinformed.

If the critics are arguing from a Christian perspective, I expect them to be mature enough in their faith not to base their philosophy on fear of "the other." If they fret that just reading this or that classical author will seduce their children away from God, it's clear that they are attributing far too much power to one individual - and that individual isn't Christ.

Unfortunately, sometimes the most outspoken opposition to classical education comes from such uninformed and fear-ridden sources. In **this thoughtful article**, John Mark Reynolds wades into the "Hebrew vs. Greek" education debate. Reynolds has done his homework. He points out the many logical fallacies and historical oversights that riddle the pro-"Hebrew," anti-classical position - leading to some very strange curriculum choices. To his analysis I would only add these three points:

(1) The meaning and cultural context of "philosophy" has changed quite dramatically in the last 2000 years. Early Christianity was seen as a "philosophy" by the Greeks and Romans of the time, not because they didn't apprehend its religious foundations, but because it implied a radical change in thinking and lifestyle. I highly recommend the writings of **Pierre Hadot** to parents who want to understand philosophy as the ancients did.

(2) In my reading of "Hebrew" homeschooling books and forums, I've been struck by a certain romanticizing of Jewish education. Just as classical education didn't begin and end with Plato, Jewish education didn't begin and end with Moses, or even with Jesus. A book like *The World of the Yeshiva* can fill in those gaps nicely for interested readers. Traditional Jewish education is as rigorous and mentally stimulating as classical education; in fact, some of its methods - Talmudic debate, for example - are quite similar to classical ones (Socratic dialogue). Family-based discipling is a noble educational model, but it is certainly not absent from Christian classical education, nor is it perfectly embodied in Jewish education.

(3) Like other religiously based educational philosophies, the "Hebrew" homeschooling movement grows out of a particular theological perspective. The tragic divisions among Christians mean that not every curriculum labeled "Christian" will be appropriate for every family. We must all use discernment, so I recommend that parents do some background reading before signing onto *any* particular philosophy. How important is it to you that the authors' presuppositions on key issues like scripture, tradition, salvation, authority, church governance, creeds, etc. match yours? Can you recognize when the authors' theological presuppositions influence how they present the material (i.e., "bias")? Will you need to "edit" the program to deal with ideas you disagree with, and if so, how much and how often? What other positions - political, social, cultural - have developed out of or become attached to this theological perspective? Differences of theological perspective are not necessarily deal-breakers when it comes to choosing curriculum, but neither should they be ignored entirely.

I have no problem with **someone who says**, "You know, I just want my kids to have two years of a foreign language in high school," or "I believe that the goal of education is gainful employment, and I don't see my child becoming a Latin teacher." I might argue with some of those folks about their definitions, but I'm satisfied if I can see that they've really understood what LCC is about - even if they reject it in the end. But I'm thankful for writers like Reynolds who are willing to ask hard questions of other homeschooling methodologies. I think we can all agree that our children deserve better than philosophies built on the shifting sands of misinformation and fear.

Drew Campbell is the author of The Latin-Centered Curriculum.

Ordering Principles

[I hardly dare add to the CiRCE Institute's excellent outline of **principles** that undergird and guide classical - and specifically Christian classical - education. But I do want to share some of the ideas I presented in Arizona. I apologize to any readers I met at the conference who have been patiently waiting for a whole month for my promised post on this subject.]

Before you can choose curriculum, you must define your educational philosophy. This is not an easy matter, for it quickly launches us into deep waters: What do I believe about the human person? What is the goal (end, *telos*) of education? What means best meet that goal? Once you have these answers worked out, you can begin to shop the marketplace of ideas to see which philosophy's assumptions best match yours.

To that end, I'd like to offer some radical notions - "radical" here in the sense of "root" - about classical education. What are the assumptions that classical thinkers and educators, ancient and modern, share about reality? And how are those ideas brought to their fullness for Christian educators? These points are, by their nature, generalizations. Not every Greek or Roman philosopher would have agreed with them. But I believe that they represent the ideas that won - the ideas that have become part of our uniquely Western worldview.

A. Reality exists, and we can have knowledge of it.
a. All is not "maya" [illusion]; the physical and spiritual worlds have real existence.
b. Physical reality is knowable through the senses and reason.
c. Spiritual reality is discernable, at least to a limited extent, by natural reason.
d. Divine reality is knowable, albeit to a limited extent, through revelation.

B. Reality is ordered.
a. Reality is, on the whole, neither random nor chaotic.
b. Nevertheless, randomness may be part of the natural world.

C. The ordering of reality is hierarchical; it is a matter of degree and distinction.
a. Hierarchy, or "divine order," is a natural part of Creation, not a human invention - although human beings can and do pervert it.
b. Hierarchy implies relative valuation: good and bad; better and worse; stronger and weaker.
c. Hierarchy necessarily implies the existence of absolutes. Not just good and better, but *best.*

D. Hierarchical order exists in the intellectual, moral, and aesthetic realms.
a. We can say "good, better, and best" about thoughts and ideas, about willful intent and action, and about form.
b. Order in the intellectual realm points toward Truth.
c. Order in the moral realm points toward Goodness.
d. Order in the aesthetic realm points toward Beauty.
e. Truth, Goodness, and Beauty are intertwined, so that we may, by analogy, speak of the beauty of a virtuous act, or the truth of an art work.

E. Truth consists of thought ordered to correspond accurately to reality.

F. Goodness consists of intent and action ordered toward the well-being of persons (and, by extension, to all Creation).

G. Beauty consists of form ordered toward balance.

H. Education should orient the child toward order: ordered thought (Truth), ordered will (Goodness), and ordered form (Beauty).

I. Christians understand God to be both the source and the goal - " the Alpha and the Omega" - of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful.
a. Truth, Goodness, and Beauty, wherever they exist, have their source in God.
b. Human beings, created in the image and likeness of God, have been given a measure of creative power.
c. This creative power allows us to understand and "co-create" true, good, and beautiful thoughts, actions, and forms. In fact, we are positively commanded to do so.
d. Human conceptions and manifestations of truth, goodness, and beauty are derivative; they only have real meaning in relation to their ultimate source and model, God.

J. Christian education should orient the child first and foremost toward God as the source of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty.

Needless to say, these are not the only principles one could name. But I hope that they provide a starting point for parents who are trying to understand what we mean when we talk about a classical, or classical Christian, worldview and how it informs classical education.

Drew Campbell is the author of The Latin-Centered Curriculum.

Classical Education: Some Distinctives

I am frequently asked how the type of education I describe in The Latin-Centered Curriculum *differs from other classical homeschooling styles. I offer the following as a brief summary of some of the characteristics of classical education as I understand it. - Drew Campbell*

1. Classical education treats **classical languages and mathematics** as the **organizing principles** of education. These subjects can only be mastered by orderly, systematic study over a period of many years. They provide the best training for "learning how to learn" and the most solid foundation for further study in literature, history, and science.

2. Classical education recognizes that memory, analysis, and expression are important facets of learning at all levels. It therefore treats the medieval **Trivium** subjects - Latin grammar, logic, and rhetoric - as disciplines in their own right. It suggests that to place undo emphasis on "ages and stages" can lead to rigidity in the curriculum and an unnatural emphasis on technique in teaching.

3. Classical education is holistic: it trains not only the mind, but also the emotions, the will, and the aesthetic sense. It fosters love for the Good, the True, and the Beautiful wherever they may be found. Its goal is to produce men and women both knowledgeable and virtuous: good persons speaking well.

4. Classical education is traditional and **conservative** in the sense that it seeks to hand on to each new generation "**the best that has been thought and said in the world**." It stands for the Permanent Things. It mitigates against chronological snobbery by setting our current concerns against the backdrop of history and requiring us to take long views. It lays upon us the responsibility of doing our part to preserve and transmit the accumulated wisdom of the race.

5. Classical education rests on the principle of *multum non multa:* quality, not quantity. It does not let the good crowd out the best. Rather than rushing students from book to book, from author to author, classical education invites students to contemplate the representative masterpieces of each historical period. It gives entree into the **Great Conversation** by allowing students to speak at length with the master teachers of the last three millennia.

6. Classical education unites the great spiritual and intellectual streams of the West, rising from Jerusalem, Athens, and Rome. As such, it represents the common cultural patrimony of both Christians and non-Christians.

*For more on this topic, see **Ordering Principles**.*

Review: Getting Started with Latin

You've heard the old joke:

Q: How do you eat an elephant?
A: One bite at a time!

For many beginning students, Latin is an elephant. The trouble is figuring out how to take the first bite. This problem is particularly acute for older beginners who don't have the luxury of twelve or thirteen years to master Latin. They are typically given a choice between tearing through an elementary program that is too simplistic and diving straight into a full program that may overwhelm them with grammar and vocabulary lists.

Consider William Linney's ***Getting Started with Latin*** your fork. This new textbook helps you take not only the first bite, but the first 134. Each concise lesson teaches exactly one thing: one word, one grammar concept. It is the perfect format for adult self-study and for school-age beginners who are too old for a course like *Latina Christiana* but not quite ready for Henle.

Mr. Linney understands beginners. His warm tone and gentle humor reassure students that they truly can master this crazy language with all its *-um*s and *-orum*s. Because he introduces new material in such small bites, students won't be overwhelmed and give up. The scope of the book is roughly equivalent to both volumes *Latina Christiana*, and students are given a choice between classical and ecclesiastical pronunciation. (The MP3 downloads are free from the **author's web site**.) Samples pages from the textbook will give you an idea of the format and the style of the exercises; the answer key is printed right in the book.

If you're hesitating over Henle, give *Getting Started with Latin* a try. Your success is all but guaranteed. Just take it one bite at a time.

A Latin Testimonial

*Julie recently posted this inspiring testimonial to the **LatinClassicalEd list**. It appears here with her kind permission. You can visit Julie's web site at **livingmath.net**.*

My middle son, age 11, started Latin for the first time last year. I held off trying to teach him because he has been a language-delayed learner, and efforts to teach language arts skills prior to his turning 10 were very discouraging to both of us. He was one of those kids that didn't really take off on reading until 10 (he *could* read before that, but really disliked reading), spelling has been extremely difficult for him to grasp, although phonics were well-mastered, it's just all those pesky exceptions that would get him. But about the time he turned 10 he started reading voluntarily a lot more, and I was seeing some other skills improving at increasing rates. He started paying attention to things he'd never noticed before. He taught himself a beautiful cursive handwriting and practiced it on copywork. He was catching spelling errors and remembering spelling rules. He was starting to "get it." So we started formal Latin a little less than a year ago. Because of the boys' ages, the Latin co-op teacher we found started with a middle / high school grammar text she was familiar with (Jenney's First Latin, the 1987 edition).

This past year has required a lot of work from him, and I have been so proud of his accomplishments. We've participated in public independent study programs off and on over the years and he had been tested twice - no surprise to me, he scored at barely basic level in language arts, while always ranked proficient or advanced in math compared to his peers taking the standardized test. I had learned not to worry too much, I'd been told by so many homeschoolers that around 10 this begins to shift, and usually by 12 or 13 the catch up is complete if there aren't other factors creating problems (true disability or extreme negative attitude toward learning a subject). I'd lived through an almost exact flip of this my oldest, who was language gifted and math delayed. The change / shift began around 10 and was complete by last year when he ended up tutoring other kids for pay in his high school math class :o)

Because we signed my son up for a class at a public ISP again last Spring, he took the standardized test they give all California 6th graders. We don't test at home, so this is actually a good experience for him that he enjoyed. He told me after the test that he found the language arts testing to be easier than the math this year. I thought that made sense, since we'd focused on l/arts with Latin and added an IEW writing class a few months earlier which he'd enjoyed. By the end of the year he was writing articles for the ISP newsletter club that he joined because he'd discovered how much he enjoyed writing.

Our "barely basic" son scored so high last spring, he is now ranked as "Advanced" in language arts, and his proficiencies have flipped from a dominance in language arts compared to math, LOL. As they say, a picture is worth a thousand words - when he saw the bar graph of his scores, his eyes flew wide open. I asked him, "Do you think Latin has been worth it?" He said, "Absolutely." This has totally changed how he views himself - his brother is language arts gifted, a natural speller, the kind of kid who never had to be taught basic language arts skills, who was reading chapter books at the end of kindergarten. He has always lived in that shadow of his gifted brother's accomplishments, and never thought he was capable of this.

After the gruntwork of getting through the hump of a LOT of grammar in Jenney, we're enjoying blending the readings in Cambridge which is using all this grammar he learned, so we are a bit more on cruise control with Latin now, and enjoying it a lot. We're increasing the focus on math because he's ready for it and has the capacity for the depth of study an algebra course will require. My son has spent the summer reading books he passed by year

after year on our home library shelves and we're having to force him to turn out his light at night to get some sleep, LOL.

I thought I'd post our experience here for some of you who might be dealing with some of the same issues with kids who are developing basic skill with highly asynchronous timing.

Julie Brennan in San Diego
Mom to dss 15 & 11-1/2, dds 9 & 7-1/2

Teacher, Teach Thyself!

Homeschoolers rightly rejoice at the increasing options for home Latin instruction. We have **excellent programs** for elementary-age students. Parents looking for **Christian Latin materials** no longer have to haunt the stacks of university libraries searching out 19th-century textbooks. **Online academies** are breathing new life into **tried-and-true methods**, with a range of offerings that puts some colleges to shame. For many busy homeschooling parents, these opportunities are real blessings, enabling us to pass on to the next generation a rich inheritance that we ourselves may not have shared in fully.

I am regularly asked by parents of young children what they can do to prepare their little ones for a classical education - the sort of deep, rich, and liberating education I describe in ***The Latin-Centered Curriculum***. Some of the answers I give are just what you'd expect: read excellent books to your children every day; keep them away from television and other junk media; let them explore the natural world freely; instill good discipline; share the treasures of your faith. But one answer seems to floor some parents. I tell them that, in the years before a child begins his formal education, the very best use of the parents' time is to learn Latin themselves. Why do I say this?

I say it because every day, several times a day, I see questions online from parents who desperately want their children to learn Latin. They do beautifully with *Latina Christiana* and can easily keep pace with their oldest child as she works through the program. But once the oldest reaches Henle, the parent falters. There are so many exercises! How can I keep up? Can't I just give her the book and let her teach herself?

Imagine you had never taken calculus. (For some of us, that doesn't take much imagining!) Would you buy a standard high school textbook and give it to your child to figure out on his own? No matter how clear the explanations, you would have to assume that, at some point, he might need a little help. As a homeschooler, there are two ways to get that help: buy it or be it. You can outsource the course to a tutor or class - no shame or regret required - or you can learn the material so that you can teach it effectively.

It's the same with Latin. Henle's explanations are models of clarity, but it is not a self-teaching text. In fact, I have yet to see any high-school level Latin curriculum that I would consider truly self-teaching. Checking the answer key isn't enough. You need to be able to explain why one doesn't say *apud domino* or *laudite*. And if you don't know Latin yourself, you simply can't do that.

We have become so used to the **romantic notion** of teachers as "facilitators of learning" that we forget that teachers should actually know more than their students. If they don't, they have no business teaching that subject. In his classic book, *The Seven Laws of Teaching,* John M. Gregory states this unequivocally: "A teacher must be one who KNOWS the lesson or truth to be taught."

If you want your child to learn Latin, there are many avenues available today, and for that we can be grateful. But if you want to teach your child Latin, there is only one way to do it: learn it yourself. In the **new edition** of *The Latin-Centered Curriculum*, I offer some suggestions for parents who want to put together a classical self-education plan; some parents are **already doing just that**. Here I will give you three simple steps to start you on your own road to Rome:

1. Get the **Henle I set** and a copy of ***English Grammar for Students of Latin***.
2. Devote 30 minutes a day to Latin. (That's one sitcom or half of a reality show.)
3. When you reach the end of Unit Five in Henle pick up a ***Lingua Latina*** as a supplement and use it to increase your reading fluency. Jeanne Neumman's ***Lingua Latina: A College Companion*** will guide you through any unfamiliar grammar or vocabulary.

I can't promise you that you will be reading Vergil after two weeks, but with steady effort over a period of years, you will make progress. Best of all, you will be able to share with your children something of immense value: not just the correct conjugation of Latin verbs, but the treasures of Latin literature.

At its best, classical homeschooling is not just a great education for your children. It's a great education for you, too.

Corrections to LCC2

Mea culpa! This page lists corrections to the new edition of *The Latin-Centered Curriculum.* If you find an error in the book, please **write to me** and I'll list the correction here. Thanks!

*

p. 210: Grade Six History schedule should read "Read through *Famous Men of Modern Times*..."

*

I inadvertently omitted a few books from the supplementary reading lists. Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Wonder-Book for Girls and Boys* and *Tanglewood Tales* should have been listed as additional read-alouds for third grade Literature. James Baldwin's *Fifty Famous Stories Retold* can be used as a supplement to the kindergarten and first grade History and Literature readings.

*

The author of the guide to mythology that I recommend for older beginners and adults fell prey to the over-zealous spell-checker in my word processing program. He is Thomas Bulfinch with a single L.

*

p. 83: *Lingua Latina,* the last book on the list of supplementary Latin readers, is put out by **Focus Publishing**.

*

p. 167: The final sentence in the "Foundations" section should read "This is the textbook recommended for secondary school."

*

p. 173: The penultimate sentence in the first paragraph is missing. It should read "The LatinClassicalEd list (groups.yahoo.com/group/LatinClassicalEd) is another excellent source of scheduling advice."

*

p. 123: The second sentence in the final paragraph contains an extra phrase. It should read "Although this book is certainly a worthy one in many ways, there are a few aspects that may be less than ideal for some families."

*

p. 129: The footnote that appears at the bottom of this page belongs on p. 130.

*

p. 163: The history spine recommendation for all later beginners is *A Short History of the World* by Roberts. (*The New Penguin History,* mistakenly referenced here, is not recommended because of its anti-religious tone. The *Short History* is a far more balanced book.)

*

The title of Hawthorne's novel is The House of *the* Seven Gables.

*

A number of science textbook titles were inadvertently omitted in the description on page 147. The following titles should be added to the list:

9th: Earth Science (Tarbuck)
12th: Conceptual Physics (Hewitt)

*

The kindergarten geography recommendations are missing from scope and sequence chart on page 62. Details of the recommendation curriculum can be found on p. 141.

Updates to LCC2

This page lists updates and additional recommendations for Latin-centered homeschoolers. New materials appear all the time, so check back often!

Click on the link to go to the appropriate section of the page:

Classical Languages: Latin and Greek

Getting Started with Latin by William E. Linney provides an introduction to the Latin language for adults and older beginners who need a slow-and-steady approach. Read my review of the book **here**.

Arithmetic and Mathematics

Singapore Math is now publishing a new "Standards" version, designed to meet U.S. state math standards. Changing math standards in the public schools have created chaos in U.S. math education for decades. While the adoption of Singapore by the California schools is a positive step, many homeschool parents, myself included, are understandably wary of textbooks written specifically for the public schools. Until we see the results of these new textbooks, I recommend that parents continue to use the older U.S. versions of the Singapore books. The one exception is the Earlybird series which will only be available in the Standards version. Homeschoolers only need the textbooks for this level, which are actually workbooks. The activity books are designed for classroom use, and the publisher has confirmed that they are unnecessary for homeschoolers.

*

Kolbe Academy is now offering DVDs to accompany Harold Jacobs' **Elementary Algebra** and **Geometry** texts. DVDs for Foerster's *Algebra and Trigonometry* are due out in Fall, 2008.

Copywork and Composition

No updates.

Literature

12/1/08: I have just published a **study guide to Lattimore's Iliad**. It is geared toward high school students but can be used by advanced middle schoolers and adult learners alike. The guide includes detailed study questions for each book of the Iliad, plus essay prompts, and memory work selections.

7/1/08: *American Literature: Essays, Short Stories, and Poetry*, an anthology containing sixth and seventh grade Literature selections from LCC2, is **now available**. Many thanks to Kathy for putting the book together! Kathy is also the creator of beautiful LCC-themed notebook covers. Visit the **Barefoot Meandering Lulu Storefront** for more information.

Religion

7/25/08: John Mason Neale's **A History of the Church**, recommended for Grade Five, is once again available from Paidea Classics! They are currently offering it in coil-bound format but plan a perfect-bound edition in the future.

Several people have asked me if this book is appropriate for non-Orthodox families. The book was written in the 1850s by an Anglican and, for the most part, reflects what today we would call a "mere Christian" viewpoint. The editors have added a handful of footnotes, mostly addressed to an Orthodox readership, explaining some Anglican terminology (e.g., "Whitsun" for Pentecost) and Eastern Christian traditions. A few small matters of emphasis may call for parental comment, but since the period covered is well before the East-West split, overall the book should be fine for most traditional Christians. The only problematic point I would note is that, in two sentences, the author describes the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 as the fulfillment of Matt. 27:25. As this does not reflect the current teaching of any church body of which I am aware, parents should emphasize that this is the author's individual interpretation.

*

Several Catholic parents have asked me to recommend a Church History "spine" to accompany the Great Books readings in high school. My choice is ***The History of the Church*** from the Didache Series, published by the Midwest Theological Forum. This textbook has received outstanding reviews from classroom and homeschool teachers alike. A **student workbook** and **teacher's manual** are also available.

*

Some students may find Eusebius hard going. Rod Bennett's *Four Witnesses: The Early Church in Her Own Words* gives students a taste of his writing without committing them to reading his whole history. Bennett highlights four of the most prominent writers of the first two Christian centuries: Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus of Lyons. Using Eusebius as a guide, the author weaves together extended quotations from the Fathers' writings, the New Testament, and contemporary historical references to create an engaging account of the early church. This book can be read on its own or in conjunction with the relevant primary source readings from the Apostolic Fathers volume listed in LCC2. Students can follow up with the suggested readings for the second and third terms, finishing up the year with Saint Augustine. This allows the student more time for the medieval theologians in 10th grade.

(N.B.: In the afterword to his book, Bennett briefly discusses his conversion from evangelical Protestantism to Catholicism, and an appendix contains passages from the patristic writings that support Catholic doctrine. The rest of the book stands on its own, should you prefer not to assign these sections.)

*

10/20/08: A new study guide for Pope Benedict XVI's book *Jesus of Nazareth* will soon be released. Other books by Pope Benedict that may be of interest as part of the LCC secondary school Religion curriculum are *Church Fathers: From Clement of Rome to Augustine* and *Jesus, the Apostles, and the Early Church*. All are available from the publisher, Ignatius Press (ignatius.com), or from your favorite bookseller.

History

Russell Kirk's book *Economics: Work and Prosperity* is available at a discounted price from **ISI Books**.

*

What if your state requires you to teach a semester of Civics/Government in high school? Where does that fit into the LCC scope and sequence? The 12th grade year is actually designed so that you can count the books read during semesters 2 and 4 for Civics. However, if you prefer a more formal, directed curriculum, I suggest *Declaration Statesmanship* by Richard Ferrier and Andrew Seeley (available from **Emmanuel Books**, **Adoremus Books**, and other venues). The course consists of a textbook, a primary source reader, and a detailed teacher's manual, complete with lesson plans, memory work suggestions, and exams. The book examines Judeo-Christian ideas as one of the intellectual foundations of American democracy (alongside Greco-Roman and Enlightenment philosophy, and the British legacy of liberty), but it never descends into the "pious and patriotic piffle" that mars so many Christian government courses. Students are asked to analyze the founding documents in detail and to follow the development of the Declaration's principles through the Civil War period and into the 20th-century Civil Rights movement. *Declaration Statesmanship* is a rigorous and thorough course for high school students and an excellent addition to the Latin-centered curriculum. See **this page** for more ideas on how to fit *Declaration Statesmanship* into the high school history sequence. You can read a more detailed review by Margot Davidson **here**.

Geography

Are you looking for a geography program that can be used with children of various ages? Several readers have given high marks to ***The Trail Guide to World Geography***. One reader provided this helpful review:

> *I used Trail Guide to World Geography three years ago, with the student notebooking pages. In addition to the TM and the student pages, you must purchase Visual Manna's Geography Through Art and The Ultimate Geography and Timeline Book. Travel videos are assigned, and children's literature is recommended, so access to a library is helpful.*
>
> *The lessons are set up with two parts: Points of Interest, and the Trails themselves. The Trails are questions the author expects kids to answer each day, for a daily geography drill. The POI are lesson ideas. Some POI are as detailed as numbered steps for a project with a balloon. Others are as open-ended as, "Study what factors create the seasons." To be successful, you need to have either a good home library and common craft supplies on hand or a plan made in time to gather materials.*

> *I have no doubt that you could stretch each section out to last a year, particularly if you start by doing World, the first and shortest section, with a K or 1st grader. If you did run out of ideas from the Primary World weeks, you could move on to the Intermediate World weeks.*
>
> *A nine week unit study (that's doing four chapters a week) of Around the World in Eight Days by Jules Verne is included in the Trail Guide, meant to fill out a 36 week year since there are only 27 weekly lessons in the rest of the guide. There are four to six research suggestions for every chapter, things like, "Research the inner workings of various kinds of clocks; use illustrations." It could be it's own one-year study by doing a single chapter a week.*
>
> *Like most unit study guides, Trail Guide is full of ideas for learning. Also like most unit study guides, it's up to the parent to pull together resources and plan lessons using these ideas.*

Other readers have suggested using the book as a one-year geography study for the whole family, using only a few of the projects. Another option is to use the extra weeks that appear at the end of the LCC2 grammar school history schedules to do a short study of one continent each year. This is a good choice for parents who do not want to spend a lot of time on geography or those who use a four-day-a-week schedule. The publisher has two additional volumes in the series, one for **U.S. geography** and the other for **Bible geography**.

Nature Study and the Natural Sciences

Eighth graders who have enjoyed the science recommendation for that year may also appreciate ***The Ten Most Beautiful Experiments*** by George Johnson. This engaging book, written by an award-winning science journalist for a non-specialist audience, introduces students to famous scientists and their most influential discoveries. It's a fine supplemental reading choice for high school students and adult learners as well.

Logic and Philosophy

Readers looking for a brief introduction to logic will enjoy D. Q. McInerny's *Being Logical: A Guide to Good Thinking*. This short, non-technical guide covers the basics of constructing an argument and identifying common logical fallacies. While not a substitute for a full course in formal logic, it is a good choice for adult learners and for high school students who need a concise introduction to the subject.

Modern Languages, the Arts, and Other Subjects

12/14/08: My memory work book is **now available** from Lulu.

Adapting LCC: An Example

Here is an example of how you can adapt the LCC reading lists to your needs. The following is a four-year literature plan that I drew up for the directors of a classical high school who asked my advice on curriculum. The plan assumes a 40-week school year.

9th: Homer (24 weeks), Oresteia (6 weeks), Aeneid (1 term)
10th: Beowulf (1 term), Dante (2 terms), Chaucer (1 term)
11th: Shakespeare (2 terms), Milton (1 term), English poetry (1 term)
12th: 19th- and 20th-century European and American novels (full year)

This plan condenses the ancients down to one year to better correspond to the school's 9th grade history program. It also gives more time to Dante and to the novel. Milton is introduced in 11th grade so that all five of the great European epics are studied during the four-year course. Since American literature is a typical high school offering in the state where the school is located, teachers would be able to select from a short list of American novels for 12th grade, along with the European ones listed in LCC2.

Adapting LCC: A Further Example

Some states require both a full year of American history and a semester of Civics (Government) in high school. If yours does, or you would like your students to spend more time on American history in high school, here's one way to arrange the courses:

9th grade: World History to 1500
10th grade: World History 1500-present
11th grade: American History
12th grade: Civics and Economics

This arrangement would require condensing the primary source readings for grade 9 and adding in a selection of later works for grade 10: More's *Utopia*, *Leviathan* by Hobbes, John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*, and the *Communist Manifesto* would be good choices. Tocqueville can be read as part of an 11th grade American History course, along with selections from the book listed for the second term of 12th grade.

For Civics, use either the readings listed for the 2nd and 4th terms of 12th grade in LCC2, or *Declaration Statesmanship* (see **my review**). Russell Kirk's book, listed for grade 8, can be used for Economics, with or without the workbook. Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom* and Roepke's *Humane Economy* would make stimulating additions to the Economics reading. Both are from a conservative perspective; parents may of course choose to present other viewpoints. Catholic parents may wish to address the Church's teachings on subsidiarity, economic justice, and work alongside secular readings in economics. (See, for example, the encyclicals ***Rerum Novarum*** and ***Centisimus Annus***.)

The Latin-Centered Curriculum Way to Climbing Parnassus

Last fall, I picked up the book *Climbing Parnassus* by Tracy Lee Simmons. I could not get enough of this book. I must have underlined something on every page. Last spring I came across Andrew Campbell's *The Latin-Centered Curriculum.* While I found *Climbing Parnassus* to be inspirational, I found *The Latin-Centered Curriculum* to be practical... doable. It is as though Campbell is saying, "This is how you climb Parnassus."

My family's homeschool has gradually changed in the last nine months. While the changes were gradual, the results have been dramatic. During the first four years of our homeschool, we followed *The Well-Trained Mind.*Having found the TWTM and Susan Wise Bauer as we were about to begin homeschooling was a blessing beyond what I can accurately describe. It has been a guide or map that has never left me feeling like so many homeschoolers I have come to know - "How do I know what I'm supposed to do next?" However, I had always had a nagging feeling about our homeschool schedule, and it would rear its ugly head from time-to-time. The feeling reminded me of what I considered to be my greatest failure as a homeschooler. It seemed that no matter how many different schedules I had come up with in our four years of homeschooling, the result was always the same: Our home felt too much like school.

Then came *Climbing Parnassus.* As I began the initial steps on the Climbing Parnassus journey, I was able to shed some of our subjects. The first was English grammar. I decided that we could cover grammar in Latin and writing. I also decided to pare down our list of literature. Instead of reading many, many fantastic books, we would read three-four of the most "top-notch" books during the academic year. These changes brought some much-needed breathing space into our daily lives. The most dramatic shift came less than a week after the Classical Christian Home Educators seminar last April. One of the messages that Andrew Kern from The Circe Institute kept relaying was "relax." He reminded me that, more than anything, my children were going to remember the attitudes we express in our homeschool. Though I was greatly inspired, I was also frustrated when I left the seminar. I knew I needed to relax. But how? I could never figure out how. No one had ever been able to tell me how. So, I prayed--yet again--that God would show me what I needed to do to make the changes I needed to make in our home. Little did I know He was about to answer my prayer.

The Friday after the seminar, I was scheduled to meet with the mothers of our co-op. Because we were going to meet in the early afternoon, our school day would be short. I was exhausted from our busy week. I was utterly despondent over a stack of books I had intended to read aloud to my boys during the week but never got to because of our busyness. So much for relaxing. After my morning cup of coffee, still not having the energy or even the desire to begin our school day, I told my two boys, "Pile onto Mommy and Daddy's bed. Today we are going to read." And so I read. I read for hours. I read several chapters out of a few books. I read living history books. I read our current literature pick. I read an assortment of library books. Next thing I knew, it was time to head over to my co-op meeting. I felt elated. I had no idea that I was actually on to something that would change our lives.

The weekend flew by quickly. As Sunday evening rolled around, Monday morning was staring me straight in the face. I felt uneasy. I was not ready to go back to the daily grind. The Friday before had been wonderfully relaxing. I did not want to let go of it yet. I decided we would spend another day simply reading. And so began our new schedule. Mondays and Fridays are for "reading aloud" our history, literature, Bible and assorted library books--with time set aside for math and Latin. Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays are for "desk work." This includes writing, math, Latin, Bible study and memory work. The greatest thing is, our homeschool no longer "feels" like school the way I knew school. Our schedule is our ownâ€”very personal. Because we do our "necessary" reading on Mondays and Fridays, I no longer have to try to get to the readings during our "desk work" days. I no longer have to try to read at 3:00 in the afternoon when I would rather be napping. I no longer have to say, "Let's read it tomorrow," and then watch the stack of unread books tease me about how far behind I have fallen.

Now we have time to do additional "for- fun" reading. My boys have more time to play outdoors, practice pitching, learn to play new songs on the piano, build tables from scrap wood, work on their dives or play a board game. And I have time to relax. I have time to be the homeschool mom I had always pictured. I have time to be there for my fellow homeschooling friends. As a family, we now have time for "the good life" my husband and I so greatly want for our boys. Most of all, we simply have time to hear the faint whispers of God truly guiding us in our everyday learning experiences. This is how I had always imagined our homeschool would be. Moreover, I have found much-needed support for our new lifestyle by way of Andrew Campbell's *Latin-Centered Curriculum.*

Just as *The Well-Trained Mind* served as a roadmap during our first four-plus years of homeschooling, *The Latin-Centered Curriculum* now serves as our new roadmap as we continue our homeschool journey onto Climbing Parnassus. Again, I am blessed to have something that will keep me from having to ask myself, "How do I know what I'm supposed to do next?"

Debra Duran Loucks wrote this article for her local classical Christian homeschool newsletter. Many thanks to Debra for allowing it to appear here!