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CLASSICAL EDUCATION, 5-8

The Pert age...is characterized by contradicting, answering back, liking to "catch people out" (especially one's elders); and by the propounding of conundrums. Its nuisance-value is extremely high.

- Dorothy Sayers, "The Lost Tools of Learning"

The distinctives of classical education

The three "developmental" stages of education

The "grammar stage" (elementary, roughly grades 1-4)

Focus: absorption of information, memorization

The "logic stage" (middle school years, roughly grades 5-8)

Focus: development of analytical thinking skills, abstract thought, cause and effect, relationship between different fields of knowledge, the way facts fit together into a logical framework.

The "rhetoric stage" (high school, roughly grades 9-12)

Focus: fluent, forceful, original self-expression in speech and writing, specialization in particular areas of learning

Distinctives of classical teaching

Language-intensive, not image focused (that is, reflective, not reactive)

Trains the mind to analyze and draw conclusions

Through conversation

Through the use of original sources

Trains the student in self-discipline

A useful distinction: Skills and content areas

Logic

- 1) The premise (the facts you start with -- statements),
- 2) The argument (the deductions you make from these facts), and
- 3) The conclusion (your final deduction -- another statement).

A fallacy is a flaw somewhere in the process -- an incorrect argument, a lousy premise, or

The study of logic has two parts:

A) A critical thinking warmup, grades 5-6

Mind Benders. Warm-Up A1, A2, A3, A4. These four books will prepare most fifth graders for the Canon Press introductory logic course. If you're having fun, you can go

on and do Books B1, B2, B3, B4. From Critical Thinking Press, 1-800-458-4849
(www.criticalthinking.com)

B) An actual logic course: *Introductory Logic*, by Douglas J. Wilson, and *Intermediate Logic*, by James B. Nance

Mathematics

$$9 \times 2 = 18$$

$$(-5)(x) = -15$$

“Real life” math problems...

Figuring out the family's grocery budget for a week (or a month); finding the best buys at the grocery store

Figuring out expenses and profits for a kid-run home business -- grass-cutting, pet-tending, babysitting, baking

Balancing a checkbook (better now than in college)

Figuring out the monthly and yearly interest on a credit-card debt (ditto)

Calculating the area of a room, a wall, or the entire house for wallpapering, carpeting, or another home project

Figuring out the actual cost of driving the car to and from a special event

Figuring out how much a restaurant meal would cost if cooked at home

Calculating the cost in work-hours of movie tickets, concert passes, or other types of entertainment

Altering a recipe so that it serves a different number of people -- reducing a six-person dish to serve two, or (more complicated) rewriting a three-person recipe to serve nine or eleven

Working out the itinerary for a family trip, complete with routes, timetables, and scheduled stops

A resource for family math: *Family Math*, by Jean Stanmark (Equals). \$17 from Rainbow Resource Center (888-841-3456).

A few programs:

Saxon Math, <http://www.saxonpublishers.com>, 800-284-7019

A Beka Math, <http://www.abekabook.com>

Singapore Math, <http://www.singaporemath.com> or <http://www.sonlight.com>

The Saxon “problem”

SAXON

Seventh grade Algebra 1/2

Eighth grade Algebra I

Ninth grade Algebra II

Tenth grade Advanced Mathematics

Eleventh grade Calculus

Twelve grade Elective

STANDARD

- Seventh grade Pre-algebra
- Eighth grade Algebra I
- Ninth grade Geometry
- Tenth grade Algebra II
- Eleventh grade Pre-calculus
- Twelfth grade Calculus

PROBLEM IF PROGRESSING MORE SLOWLY

- Alternate Saxon sequence:
- Fifth grade Math 65
 - Sixth grade Math 76
 - Seventh grade Math 87
 - Eighth grade Algebra 1/2

History

The chronological study of history: History in perspective
Three repetitions of the same four-year pattern:

Ancients	6,000 BC - AD 400
Medieval/Early Renaissance	AD 400-1600
Late Renaissance/ Early Modern	1600-1850
Modern	1850-present

Base text: Kingfisher History Encyclopedia or another chronological “spine”

- 1) Read and outline a section from the History of the World

Outlining

Fifth grade:

- I.
- II.
- III.

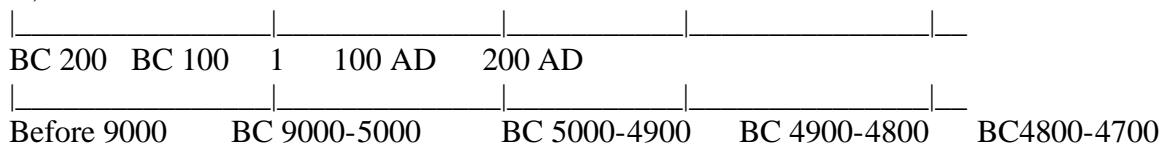
Sixth grade:

- I. First main point
 - A. First supporting point
 - B. Second supporting point
- II. Second main point
 - A. First supporting point
 - B. Second supporting point
 - C. Third supporting point

Seventh and eighth grade:

- I. First main point
 - A. First supporting point
 - 1. Detail
 - 2. Detail
 - B. Second supporting point

2) Mark all dates on the time line



- 3) Find the region under study on the globe, the wall map, and in the atlas
- 4) Read additional books from the library, including primary sources, depending on the child's interest in the topic.

FOR EXAMPLE, while studying early US history:

Joy Hakim's *A History of US* series: readable, written in story format, and interesting.

Volume 2: Making Thirteen Colonies (1607-1732)

The American Revolution by Bruce Bliven was first published in 1958; it gives a very detailed account of the struggle for independence and of George III's misdeeds

A Gathering of Days: A New England Girl's Journal 1830-32. The Newbery Award-winning journal of a teenage girl in colonial New Hampshire.

A Coloring Book of The American Revolution, Bellerophon. Based on a set of eighteenth-century caricatures, \$3.95.

Made for Trade, a game of early American bartering. Learn about both history and economics

Use and evaluation of Primary Sources

Jackdaws

The Mayflower and the Pilgrim Fathers, nine primary sources,

five Broadsheet Essays

The American Revolution, eighteen primary sources, five

Broadsheet Essays (a good one!)

The Making of the Constitution, nine primary sources, five

Broadsheet Essays

www.jackdaw.com, American Home School Publishing.

5) Prepare summaries of information on at least two of the above topics and file them in the History Notebook.

Fifth grader: 1 paragraph

Sixth grader: 2 paragraphs

Seventh grader: ½ to 1 page

Eighth grader: 1-1 ½ pages

Language arts: Reading, writing, grammar

Reading

Reading, grades five through eight, is keyed to the history curriculum.

Fifth grade: Readings from/about the Ancients, 5000 BC til 400 AD

Sixth grade: Readings from/about the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, 400-1600 AD

Seventh grade: Readings from/about the late Renaissance and early Modern period, 1600-1850

Eighth grade: Readings from/about the Modern period, 1850-present

This study serves as preparation for Great Books study in high school

Procedure:

- 1) Read
- 2) Talk
- 3) Write

1) Read. The process is simple: you're going to assign the child imaginative readings that roughly correspond to the period under study in history. (An hour, three times per week.)

2) Talk. Then you're going to talk to the child about the book: What is or isn't important in the plot, whether the characters are heroes or villains.

For a novel/story:

Who is this book about? (central character[s])

What do the central characters want?

What keeps them/him/her from getting it?

How do they/him/her get what they want?

Do they have an enemy or enemies? Is there a villain?

What does the villain want?

What do you think is the most important event in the story?

What leads up to this event?

How are the characters different after this event?

Pick out the most important event in each chapter.

How many different stories does the writer tell?

For a biography:

What kind of family did the subject come from?

What were his/her parents like?

Where did he go to school?

What did he want the most as a child? As a grownup?

How did he go about getting it?

Name three or four important people in his life.

Did he/she get married? To whom? When?

Did they have children?

What was the most important event in his life?

Name three other important events in his life.

Did he get what he wanted in life? Why or why not?

Why do we still remember this person?

For evaluation:

- What was the most exciting part of the book?
- What was the most boring part of the book?
- Did you like the character[s]? Why or why not?
- Did you hope that he/she would get what he/she wanted?
- Did any part of the book seem particularly real?
- Did any part of the book seem unlikely to you?
- Did you hope it would end in another way? How?
- Would you read this book again?
- Which one of your friends would enjoy this book?

4) Write. In fifth and sixth grade, you're going to ask the child to do a narration: summarizing the book or some part of it in 1/2 to 1 page.

In seventh or eighth grade, you're going to ask them to begin to write brief compositions about one of these questions. More persuasive: I liked this book because....This character was admirable because....I didn't like this character because..

Sample readings:

Fifth grade, Ancients: BC 5000-400 AD

Fifth-to-eighth-grade books (adaptations, biographies, and historical novels) about:

Confucius

Chinese and Japanese folk-tales

Ancient Chinese and Japanese poetry

Myths of ancient Egypt

Tales of the pharaohs

The Bible

Moses, Abraham, David, Solomon, Esther, Ruth

Homer

Buddha

Socrates

Plato

Aristotle

Alexander the Great

Roman emperors

The Iliad and The Odyssey

Greek and Roman myths

Aesop's Fables

Indian folk-tales

African folk-tales

Cicero

Virgil

Egypt, Greece, Rome

Roger Lancelyn Green has rewritten Greek and Egyptian myths and the story of the fall of Troy in clear, vivid language accessible to most fifth-graders. These books, published by Puffin Classics, have become minor classics in their own right. You can probably find them in the library, but they're well worth buying; parents and older children will enjoy

them just as much. The Luck of Troy

Tales of the Greek Heroes

Tales of Ancient Egypt

American Home-School Publishing sells Padraic Colum's classic retellings; you should also be able to find these at the library.

The Children's Homer, Iliad and Odyssey

The Golden Fleece, Greek myths

Black Ships Before Troy: The Story of THE ILIAD, Rosemary Sutcliffe, illustrated by Alan Lee (Delacorte Press, 1993). A good retelling.

The Wanderings of Odysseus: The Story of THE ODYSSEY, Rosemary Sutcliffe, illustrated by Alan Lee (Delacorte Press, 1995). A lovely version.

The Myths and Legends series, originally published by Henry Z. Walck, Inc., has been picked up and reissued by Oxford University Press. These are available from your public library or through a local bookstore. The stories are engrossing and well-written.

Particularly good for "free reading" time.

English Fables and Fairy Stories, James Reeves

Irish Sagas and Folk-Tales, Eileen O'Faolain

Scottish Folk-Tales and Legends, Barbara Ker Wilson

Welsh Legends and Folk-Tales, Gwyn Jones

French Legends, Tales and Fairy Stories, Barbara Leonie Picard

Scandinavian Legends and Folk-Tales, Gwyn Jones

Russian Tales and Legends, Charles Downing

Yugoslav Folk-Tales, Nada Curcija-Prodanovic

Swiss-Alpine Folk-Tales, Fritz Muller-Guggenbuhl

German Hero-Sagas and Folk Tales, Barbara Leonie Picard

Japanese Tales and Legends, Helen and William McAlpine

Chinese Myths and Fantasies, Cyril Birch

India's Tales and Legends, J. E. B. Gray

African Myths and Legends, Kathleen Arnott

Olivia Coolidge has retold ancient stories in "lucid, simple, yet powerful prose" (School Library Journal).

Greek Myths (Houghton Mifflin) \$14.20

The Trojan War (Houghton Mifflin) 6.60

Caesar's Gallic Wars (Shoe String Press) 20.42

Based on Caesar's Commentaries, the story of Caesar's wars in Gaul, 58-51 BC; the only retelling of Caesar we've ever seen!

The Last Days of Socrates, Plato. Contains the two dialogues "On Piety" and "The Death of Socrates"; most fifth-graders can read this if you take one of the parts.

Historical Novels to find at your library...

The Golden Goblet, Eloise Jarvis McGraw (Penguin). A young Egyptian boy solves the mystery of a goblet stolen from the City of the Dead.

Mara, Daughter of the Nile, Eloise Jarvis McGraw (Penguin). An Egyptian slave girl gets involved with rivals who battle over the throne.

Cleopatra, by Diane Stanley and Peter Vennema. Well-researched and beautifully illustrated life of the Egyptian queen.

The Bronze Bow, Elizabeth George Speare. A Jewish rebel in first-century Galilee encounters the itinerant preacher Jesus. A Newbery Medal winner.

Outcast, Rosemary Sutcliff. A Roman infant is rescued from a shipwreck and raised in a British village.

The Eagle of the Ninth, Rosemary Sutcliff. In 119 AD, a Roman legion disappears in the wilds of Britain; fifteen years later, the commander's son sets out to find the mission company.

The Silver Branch, Rosemary Sutcliff. In the sequel to *The Eagle of the Ninth*, Saxons raid Britain and the Roman provinces fight for their land.

A sample sixth grade list, Middle Ages/Early Renaissance: 400-1600 AD

In sixth grade, the student will concentrate on literature from and about the Middle Ages and early Renaissance (400-1600 AD), a period that coincides with her study of History. If she's a good reader, she can tackle a few originals this year; many sixth-graders are capable of reading parts of Malory, Chaucer, and *Beowulf* in modern English translation, as well as scenes from Shakespeare.

Sixth grade is the first year the student will actually complete a reading list for the year. Aim to read the following works this year, in the following order:

Beowulf: A New Telling, by Robert Nye (Laurel Leaf, 1982); a good (and very exciting) adaptation for sixth-graders.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, verse translation by J.R. R. Tolkien (Ballantine Books, 1988). Not a scholarly standard, but wonderful verse.

Canterbury Tales, retold by Geraldine McCaughrean (Oxford University Press, Oxford Illustrated Classics Series, 1995). A hardcover, prose retelling, with illustrations.

The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales, Geoffrey Chaucer. A good modern English version, easily available, is the Penguin Classics edition (trans. Neville Coghill). The explanatory notes, annoyingly, are at the back of the book.

Dante's Inferno, Cantos I-V. The standard translation is Allen Mandelbaum's, but for reading aloud we like the new translation by former poet laureate Robert Pinsky (Noonday Press, 1996).

Saint George and the Dragon, from Spenser's *The Fairy Queen*. A fun edition is Margaret Hodges retelling (Little, Brown & Co., 1990). This is really too simple for sixth-graders, but Geraldine McCaughrean's retelling is unfortunately out of print. Check your library for it; you might get lucky.

A version of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. Malory himself is pretty thick even for high school students, but choose one (or more) of the following:

The Boy's King Arthur : Sir Thomas Malory's

History of King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table (Atheneum, 1989). Edited by Sidney Lanier, original illustrations by N.C. Wyeth. Pardon the sexist title, but this is a classic adaptation of Malory, and the Wyeth illustrations are spectacular.

The Sword and the Circle : King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, by Rosemary Sutcliff (Puffin, 1994). Paperback retelling of Malory.

The Sword in the Stone, T. H. White's marvelous reworking of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* (Philomel Books, 1993). This is the first in White's four-novel adaptation of Malory; all four are collected together into *The Once and Future King* (Ace Books, 1987). This is a

classic in its own right.

Shakespeare Stories, by Leon Garfield (Houghton Mifflin, 1998). These narrative retellings of twelve plays include much of the original dialogue.

IF YOUR SIXTH-GRADER IS A GOOD READER, ALSO INCLUDE ONE SHAKESPEARE PLAY:

Choose one of the following Shakespeare plays, using the Oxford School Shakespeare editions, Oxford University Press; wonderfully clear texts.

Macbeth

Henry V

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Writing

In the classical curriculum, the student is already writing summaries in history and literature and is moving towards written arguments. In addition to this content-based writing, he should also use a “writing program.”

Possible programs:

Writing Strands

Institute for Excellence in Writing

Wordsmith

Grammar

Continue to use a rigorous programmed grammar curriculum:

A Beka Book

Shurley Grammar

1. The student should keep a Grammar Notebook (or section of a notebook). Every time he encounters a definition or rule ("A noun is the name of a person, place, thing, or idea"), he should write it down in the Grammar: Rules section of the Language Notebook. This way, he'll end each year with a handy reference section of grammar rules and definitions.

2. Diagramming MUST be included in the curriculum.

Good sentence:

“Here, he produced a decanter of curiously light wine, and a block of curiously heavy cake, and administered instalments of those dainties to the young people at the same time.” (*A Christmas Carol*)

Bad sentence:

“Spending too much time daydreaming and her husband’s insensitivity made Carol miserable.” (From a student paper on *Main Street*)

Spelling and word study

Transition from spelling to word study. The student should begin to keep a Word Notebook with prefixes, suffixes, and roots:

PREFIX	SUFFIX	MEANING/FUNCTION	LANGUAGE (if given)
contra		opposite, against	Latin

ROOT	MEANING	LANGUAGE
functio	to perform	Latin
polis	city	Greek

Science

In every field, the student should know how the scientist conducts experiments -- the biologist, the astronomer, the chemist, the physicist.

For biology, the student should learn about cells and their functions; about the physical systems that bring living things nutrients and air; about the ways living creatures reproduce; and about the different characteristics that divide the animal and plant kingdoms into phyla, classes, orders, and families. He should know the way living things related to each other -- the food chain.

The student of earth science and astronomy should know about the makeup of earth and space; about the different types of materials that make up the earth, the types of objects found in space, and their composition; about the way the earth behaves and the rules that govern planetary motion. He should learn about the earth's relationship to the moon, the solar system, and the rest of the universe.

The young chemist should know the basic elements -- the building blocks of the physical universe -- and how they interact. He should be able to relate this knowledge to biology, earth science, and astronomy. What elements make up living things, the earth, the stars?

The beginning physicist should know not only what the universe is made of, but how that matter behaves in different circumstances (heated, chilled). He should know how molecules behave, how the four forces (gravity, electromagnetism, weak and strong nuclear forces) affect matter. He should know the basic properties of light.

Method:

- 1) Preparing reports on scientific topics
- 2) Sketching important diagrams (the parts of a cell, the structure of an atom)
- 3) Doing experiments.

Fifth grade: Biology

Sixth grade: Earth science and astronomy

Seventh grade: Chemistry

Eighth grade: Physics

Base texts: The Kingfisher Science Encyclopedia, Catherine Headlam, General Editor

Fifth grade:

How Nature Works, David Burnie (Reader's Digest Books, 1991)

Biology for Every Kid, Janice VanCleave (John Wiley Publishers).

Creepy Crawlies and the Scientific Method, Sally Stenhouse Kneidel. Over 100 hands-on science experiments for children are included; shows parents how to teach children the five steps of the scientific method: Question, Hypothesis, Methods, Result, and Conclusion.

Sixth grade:

How the Universe Works, Heather Couper and Nigel Henbest (Reader's Digest Books, 1994).

How the Earth Works, John Farndon and Michael Dunning (Reader's Digest Books, 1992).

The Glow-in-the-Dark Night Sky Book, by Clint Hatchett, illustrated by Stephen Marchesi (Random House, 1988).

Earth Science for Every Kid, Janice VanCleave (John Wiley Publishers). 101 additional experiments

Astronomy for Every Kid, Janice VanCleave (John Wiley Publishers). 101 additional experiments.

Seventh grade:

Eyewitness Science: Chemistry (Dorling Kindersley Inc.).

Chemistry for Every Kid, Janice VanCleave (John Wiley Publishers).

Also consider: Smithsonian Microchem XM3000 chemistry kit, a good, complete, and safe chemistry .

Eighth grade (pick two)

Eyewitness Science series is published by Dorling Kindersley, Inc.

Force & Motion

Electricity

Time & Space

Adventures in Science

Electricity

Color & Light

Magnetism

How Things Work

PROCEDURE:

Plan on doing science two days per week, for an hour and a half per day. The student will spend the first science period reading through his assigned science pages and preparing a report; he'll spend the second making any sketches, and then doing an experiment and recording its outcome.

Your schedule for each year, then, will look like this:

Day One Read assigned pages; record dates; prepare science report, using text, Science Encyclopedia, and library books. Spend ninety minutes reading and writing.

Day Two Make any sketches; do experiments and record results.

Use a Science Notebook to organize each year's study:

- 1) Reports
- 2) Sketches
- 3) Experiments
- 4) Extra Activities

1) Reports

Brief summaries of the information in the science book. Reports will grow progressively more complicated. The fifth-grader will write science reports of two to three paragraphs; the sixth-grader, a page; the seventh-grader, a page and a half; the eighth-grader, two

pages.

2) Sketches

Sketches should be done carefully, with colored pencils, and with all the parts labelled in clear print.

3) Experiments

In all the sciences, the student will experiment -- using the scientific method to test and confirm his newfound knowledge.

Experiments should be recorded on a page following this outline:

- 1) What question am I trying to answer? (state the question)
- 2) What could the answer be? (form a hypothesis)
- 3) How will I test this answer? (the steps of the experiment)
- 4) What result did I get?
- 5) Does this agree with the answer I thought I would get?
If not, what answer should I give instead?

4) Extra activities

As time and interest permit, periodically plan extra activities and "field trips" to science museums or local science exhibits. Many areas also have science clubs (nature, astronomy, computer, etc.) that welcome student and family participation. When possible, coordinate the activity with the science subject under study each year. In the Notebook, keep track of the activities. You can simply write:

- 1) Visited Science Museum. Saw special history of machines exhibit on September 10.
- 2) Attended computer club, October 11.
- 3) Went on nature walk in park to identify trees, October 15.
- 4) Entered Science Fair with my project, The Orbit of Jupiter, November 12
and so on.