

*Simply Charlotte Mason presents*

# *Hearing and Reading, Telling and Writing*

*A Charlotte Mason Language Arts Handbook*

SAMPLE

*by Sonya Shafer*

*Now you can teach language arts confidently and simply.*

Teaching language arts doesn't have to be complicated. With the Charlotte Mason Method, you'll find that language arts can be enjoyable and simple.

This handbook outlines all of Charlotte's great methods and tips for helping your child communicate through hearing and reading, telling and writing. Because, really, that's what language arts is all about.

- Discover the powerful—yet few—methods that Charlotte used to cover all the aspects of language arts.
- Experience how her approach simplifies language arts for both the teacher and the student.
- Gain confidence that you're covering all the aspects of language arts.
- Learn what to teach, when to teach it, and how.
- Give your child a quality language arts program.

Filled with practical tips, lesson ideas, timeless methods, and Charlotte's own words in an easy-to-read format, *Hearing and Reading, Telling and Writing* will help you relax and know that you've got "this language arts thing" covered.

*Simply*  
*Charlotte Mason*  
*.com*

*Hearing and Reading,  
Telling and Writing*

**A Charlotte Mason Language Arts Handbook**

by  
**Sonya Shafer**

Hearing and Reading, Telling and Writing: A Charlotte Mason Language Arts Handbook

© 2010, Sonya Shafer

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or distributed in any form by any means—graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, or storing in information storage and retrieval systems—without written permission from the publisher.

Cover Photo: Ruth Shafer

Cover Design: Ruth Shafer and John Shafer

Published by

Simply Charlotte Mason, LLC

P.O. Box 892

Grayson, Georgia 30017-0892

ISBN 978-1-61634-094-0

[SimplyCharlotteMason.com](http://SimplyCharlotteMason.com)

# Contents

Hearing and Reading, Telling and Writing . . . . .	5
Introduction . . . . .	7

## *Part 1: Language Arts Simplified*

Chapter 1: Language Arts . . . . .	11
Chapter 2: Charlotte Mason's Language Arts Program . . . . .	15

## *Part 2: Integrated Methods*

Chapter 3: Good Literature . . . . .	19
Chapter 4: Vocabulary . . . . .	25
Chapter 5: Reading for Instruction . . . . .	29
Chapter 6: Narration . . . . .	43
Chapter 7: Composition . . . . .	63
Chapter 8: Reading Aloud . . . . .	73

## *Part 3: Language Arts Lessons*

Chapter 9: Beginning Reading . . . . .	79
Chapter 10: Copywork and Transcription . . . . .	91
Chapter 11: Dictation . . . . .	99
Chapter 12: Poetry and Shakespeare . . . . .	107
Chapter 13: Recitation and Memorization . . . . .	119
Chapter 14: English Grammar . . . . .	129

## *Appendix*

Proofreading and Reference Skills . . . . .	137
Written Narration/Composition Samples . . . . .	139
Poetry Narration Samples . . . . .	159
Narration Questions that Charlotte Used . . . . .	173
Narration Ideas . . . . .	175
Two Mothers' Conversation about Teaching Reading . . . . .	179
A Beginning Reading Lesson Plan . . . . .	183
English Grammar Lessons . . . . .	187



# *Hearing and Reading, Telling and Writing*

“Our ‘find’ is that children have a natural aptitude for literary expression which they enjoy in hearing or reading and employ in telling or writing” (Vol. 6, p. 90).





# *Introduction*

In my years of helping other Charlotte Mason homeschoolers, probably the one topic that comes up most often is language arts. I receive questions from “How do you do language arts the Charlotte Mason way?” to “What about composition?” to “How do you teach spelling and vocabulary?” to “Can you recommend a living English grammar book?”

This handbook is the answer to those questions and more. In these pages you will find that Charlotte’s approach to language arts is simple, saves time, and uses common sense methods.

It is my hope that having Charlotte’s methods and ideas gathered into one place, along with her own words, will provide you with a quick go-to resource that will boost your confidence and reassure you that you have “this language arts thing” covered.

Blessings on you as you encourage your children in hearing and reading, telling and writing.

Excerpts from Charlotte Mason’s books are surrounded by quotation marks and accompanied by a reference to which book in the series the excerpt came from.

- Vol. 1: Home Education
- Vol. 2: Parents and Children
- Vol. 3: School Education
- Vol. 4: Ourselves
- Vol. 5: Formation of Character
- Vol. 6: A Philosophy of Education



*Part 1*

**Language Arts  
Simplified**



# Chapter 1

## *Language Arts*

### Notes

Don't let the fancy term throw you: "language arts." Back in Charlotte Mason's day that term didn't exist. It's simply an educational label that was invented along the way. In fact, let's take the term apart for a moment and think about what it means.

"Art" is a way of communicating an idea, whether it is done through music, paint, sculpture, or dance. The goal of "art" is to communicate an idea.

Now add the word "language" to that concept. The goal of "language arts" is to be able to use a language proficiently in order to communicate an idea.

That's it. Nothing scary or intimidating. Just learning how to communicate ideas through language. You've been teaching language arts to your children naturally since they were born.

### The Parts of Language Arts

Since we want our children to be proficient at communicating ideas through language, we want to make sure we cover all the ways language occurs. So language arts include the four main components of

- Listening,
- Reading,
- Speaking, and
- Writing.

Everything that relates to listening, speaking, reading, and writing in your selected language can be considered part of your language arts program.

Teachers through the years have tried to break down that big goal of "communicating ideas through language" into individual skills to work on (as teachers are apt to do). Most language arts programs will include these specific skills.

Alphabet	Listening Skills
Phonics/Beginning Reading	Parts of Speech
Rhyming Words	Sentence Structure
Handwriting	Punctuation
Reading Comprehension	Capitalization
Writing Composition	Public Speaking
Vocabulary	Proofreading
Spelling	Grammar
Reference skills (alphabetizing; using a dictionary, etc.)	
Word study (homonyms, synonyms, prefixes, suffixes)	

*For most of you reading this book, that selected language will be English. So we will work from that viewpoint throughout the rest of this book. If your selected language is other than English, you can apply the same principles to your selected language.*

*Of all the skills listed, the only two I have not found specifically mentioned in Charlotte Mason's writings are proofreading and reference skills. However, Charlotte's principles easily apply to those skills. See page 137 for those ideas.*

## Notes

Most traditional language arts programs cover those skills as fifteen or more separate subjects. Charlotte Mason used about half that many subjects and still covered all the skills in an interesting and living way that kept the students' attention and encouraged them to love learning.

What's more, her methods gave balanced coverage to the four main language arts categories: listening, reading, speaking, and writing.

### Language Arts and CM Methods

Are you curious how Charlotte covered the fifteen-plus skills in half as many subjects? Here is a chart of how the various language arts skills are covered in Charlotte Mason methods.

*Use this chart for reassurance whenever you get concerned that you've left out a specific skill.*

Language Art	Subject or Skill	CM Method
Writing	Handwriting	Copywork
	Composition	Written narration; Poetry
	Spelling	Copywork; Dictation
	Punctuation Capitalization	Copywork; Dictation; Grammar
	Parts of speech; Sentence structure	Grammar; Dictation
	Vocabulary	Copywork; Written narration; Dictation
Reading	How to read (alphabet, phonics, sight words, etc.)	Beginning reading
	Reading comprehension	Narration (both oral and written); Reading for Instruction; Poetry
	Vocabulary	Copywork; Dictation; Narration; Reading for Instruction; Poetry
Speaking	Public speaking	Oral narration; Recitation
	Sentence structure	Grammar; Narration; Recitation
	Vocabulary	Narration; Recitation
Listening	Comprehension	Narration; Dictation; Recitation; Reading for Instruction; Poetry
	Rhyming words	Beginning reading; Poetry

Or looking at it from the other perspective, the chart on page 13 lists the Charlotte Mason methods and the language arts skills that each one teaches.

## Notes

CM Method	Subject or Skill	Language Art
Copywork	Handwriting; Punctuation; Capitalization; Vocabulary; Spelling	Writing Reading
Narration	Reading comprehension; Listening comprehension; Public speaking (oral narration); Composition (written narration); Vocabulary; Sentence structure	Reading Writing Speaking Listening
Prepared Dictation	Vocabulary; Spelling; Sentence structure; Punctuation; Capitalization; Listening comprehension	Writing Reading Listening
Grammar	Punctuation; Capitalization; Parts of speech; Sentence structure	Writing Speaking
Beginning Reading	Rhyming words; How to read (alphabet, phonics, sight words, etc.)	Reading Listening
Reading for Instruction	Reading comprehension; Vocabulary	Reading Listening
Recitation	Public speaking; Vocabulary; Sentence structure; Listening comprehension	Speaking Listening
Poetry	Rhyming words; Composition; Reading comprehension; Listening comprehension; Vocabulary	Listening Speaking Reading Writing

*Use this chart to remind yourself how rich Charlotte's methods are.*

One of Charlotte's main strategies was to integrate language arts studies into other subjects, rather than pulling them out as separate skills. So as the students were doing History, for example, they were also practicing listening, reading, speaking, and writing, because Charlotte used the methods of Reading for Instruction and Narration for History.

This strategy of integrating language arts has three great benefits.

- It encourages consistency. When the same expectations are carried across all subjects, consistency is strengthened. A student will progress in his language arts skills if he is expected to use them just as much in his History lesson as in a separate, say, Reading Comprehension lesson.

- It saves time and money. By using Charlotte's methods of integrating language arts, you can cover the fifteen-plus skills in half as many subjects, and you don't

*Notes*

have to purchase separate materials for all the skills.

- It maintains the student's interest. Integrating language arts into other subjects means that your child will be working with living books and material he is already interested in. Plus, he will gain a sense of competency as he practices language arts in "real" settings, rather than in isolated exercises or lists.

Charlotte believed that children are much more capable of dealing with language than most adults give them credit for. And her methods communicated that idea to each child.



## Chapter 2

# *Charlotte Mason's Language Arts Program*

A Charlotte Mason language arts program is not complicated. Here is the simple breakdown grade by grade. Notice which methods are integrated into other subjects that you are teaching anyway, and which methods are designed for specific language arts lessons. You will find what Charlotte said, including the practical how-to's for each section of the chart, in the rest of this book.

Grade 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>Integrated into Regular Subjects</b> (like History, Geography, Bible, Science, Literature, etc.)											
<b>Basic Principles for all Grades:</b> Good literature, not twaddle; Vocabulary naturally through context											
<b>Reading for Instruction:</b> Students this age have their lesson books read to them.				<b>Reading for Instruction:</b> Students this age read their lesson books for themselves.							
<b>Oral Narration:</b> Naturally includes reading comprehension; preparation and practice for composition.											
			<b>Written Narration:</b> Naturally includes reading comprehension; basis for composition guidance.								
			<b>Practice Reading Aloud</b>								
<b>Specific Language Arts Lessons</b>											
<b>Beginning Reading:</b> Includes rhymes, phonics, and sight words; practice reading aloud.											
<b>Copywork and Transcription:</b> Naturally includes capitalization, punctuation, beginning spelling awareness.				<b>Dictation:</b> Includes capitalization, punctuation, spelling; reinforces good writing style and English grammar							
<b>Poetry:</b> Includes rhymes, memorization, and recitation.											
			<b>Shakespeare</b>								
			<b>English Grammar</b>								



## *Part 2*

# Integrated Methods



## Chapter 6

# Narration

## Notes

*Narration is a method that should be integrated into regular subjects.*

“All right, Dee,” said Mom. “I’m going to read this only once, and I want you to pay close attention. When I’m done reading, I’m going to ask you to tell me all about what I read. Ready?”

Dee nodded and Mom started reading, not too fast but not too slow. As she read, she could see Dee concentrating on what was being said. It wasn’t difficult, since the story was captivating, and she was careful to stop before Dee lost her focus.

“Now tell me what you remember,” Mom instructed.

Dee took a moment to collect her thoughts and determine how to begin, then she recounted the reading in good detail and in her own words.

Mom listened with satisfaction, knowing that Dee was learning an important skill that would serve her well into adulthood.

### Charlotte’s Thoughts on Narration

#### *General Guidelines for All Grades*

**1. Your child should show what he knows by narrating—either orally or in written form—what he has read or heard.**

“As knowledge is not assimilated until it is reproduced, children should ‘tell back’ after a single reading or hearing; or should write on some part of what they have read” (Vol. 6, Preface and p. 155).

“Oral teaching was to a great extent ruled out; a large number of books on many subjects were set for reading in morning school-hours; so much work was set that there was only time for a single reading; all reading was tested by a narration of the whole or a given passage, whether orally or in writing. Children working on these lines know months after that which they have read and are remarkable for their power of concentration (attention); they have little trouble with spelling or composition and become well-informed, intelligent persons” (Vol. 6, p. 15).

“What they receive under this condition they absorb immediately and show that they *know* by that test of knowledge which applies to us all, that is, they can tell it with power, clearness, vivacity and charm” (Vol. 6, p. 63).

“It is our part to see that every child *knows* and *can tell*, whether by way of oral narrative or written essay” (Vol. 6, p. 171).

“Whatever a child or grown-up person can tell, that we may be sure he knows, and what he cannot tell, he does not know” (Vol. 6, pp. 172, 173).

“As knowledge is not assimilated until it is reproduced, children should ‘tell back’ after a single reading or hearing; or should write on some part of what they have read.”

## Notes

“Children shew the same surprising power of knowing, evinced by the one sure test,—they are able to ‘tell’ each work they have read not only with accuracy but with spirit and originality” (Vol. 6, p. 182).

“The reading is tested by narration, or by writing on a test passage” (Vol. 6, p. 241).

“What the children have read they know, and write on any part of it with ease and fluency, in vigorous English” (Vol. 6, p. 241).

“Let the child . . . tell what he has read in whole or in part on the instant, and again, in an examination paper months later” (Vol. 6, p. 258).

“Let the boy read and he knows, that is, if he must tell again what he has read.

“This, of telling again, sounds very simple but it is really a magical creative process by means of which the narrator sees what he has conceived, so definite and so impressive is the act of narrating that which has been read only once” (Vol. 6, p. 261).

“It is true that we all read and that narration is as natural as breathing, its value depending solely upon what is narrated. What we have perhaps failed to discover hitherto is the immense hunger for knowledge (curiosity) existing in everyone and the immeasurable power of attention with which everyone is endowed; that everyone likes knowledge best in a literary form; that the knowledge should be exceedingly various concerning many things on which the mind of man reflects; but that knowledge is acquired only by what we may call “the *act of knowing*,” which is both encouraged and tested by narration, and which further requires the later test and record afforded by examinations” (Vol. 6, pp. 290, 291).

“They master a few pages at a single reading so thoroughly that they can ‘tell it back’ at the time or months later” (Vol. 6, p. 291).

### ***2. Require a narration after only one reading.***

“He should be trained from the first to think that one reading of any lesson is enough to enable him to narrate what he has read, and will thus get the habit of slow, careful reading, intelligent even when it is silent, because he reads with an eye to the full meaning of every clause” (Vol. 1, p. 227).

“I have already spoken of the importance of a single reading. If a child is not able to narrate what he has read once, let him not get the notion that he may, or that he must, read it again. A look of slight regret because there is a gap in his knowledge will convict him. The power of reading with perfect attention will not be gained by the child who is allowed to moon over his lessons” (Vol. 1, pp. 229, 230).

“The simplest way of dealing with a paragraph or a chapter is to require the child to narrate its contents after a single attentive reading,—*one* reading, however slow, should be made a condition; for we are all too apt to make sure we shall have another opportunity of finding out ‘what ’tis all about’ There is the weekly review if

“Whatever a child or grown-up person can tell, that we may be sure he knows, and what he cannot tell, he does not know.”

## Notes

we fail to get a clear grasp of the news of the day; and, if we fail a second time, there is a monthly or a quarterly review or an annual summing up: in fact, many of us let present-day history pass by us with easy minds, feeling sure that, in the end, we shall be *compelled* to see the bearings of events. This is a bad habit to get into; and we should do well to save our children by not giving them the vague expectation of second and third and tenth opportunities to do that which should have been done at first” (Vol. 3, pp. 179, 180).

“A *single reading* is insisted on, because children have naturally great power of attention; but this force is dissipated by the re-reading of passages, and also, by questioning, summarising, and the like” (Vol. 6, Preface).

“This is what happens in the narrating of a passage read: each new consecutive incident or statement arrives because the mind asks itself,—“What next?” For this reason it is important that only one reading should be allowed; efforts to memorise weaken the power of attention, the proper activity of the mind” (Vol. 6, p. 17).

“From twenty to sixteen consecutive readings a week might be afforded in a wide selection of books,—literature, history, economics, etc.,—books read with the concentrated attention which makes a single reading suffice” (Vol. 6, p. 86).

“A *single reading* is a condition insisted upon because a naturally desultory habit of mind leads us all to put off the effort of attention as long as a second or third chance of coping with our subject is to be hoped for” (Vol. 6, p. 171).

“I dwell on the single reading because, let me repeat, it is impossible to fix attention on that which we have heard before and know we shall hear again” (Vol. 6, p. 261).

“Their knowledge should be tested, not by questions, but by the oral (and occasionally the written) reproduction of a passage after one reading” (Vol. 6, pp. 341, 342).

**3. Before reading the portion for today, help your child talk a little about what happened last time in order to anticipate what might happen in today’s reading.**

“Before the reading for the day begins, the teacher should talk a little (and get the children to talk) about the last lesson, with a few words about what is to be read, in order that the children may be animated by expectation; but she should beware of explanation, and, especially, of forestalling the narrative” (Vol. 1, pp. 232, 233).

**4. Write any key names or words from the reading on a small whiteboard or sheet of paper for your child to see as he listens and narrates.**

“Proper names are written on the blackboard; and, at the end, children narrate the substance of the lesson” (Vol. 3, p. 280).

**5. Read enough to include a full episode, then ask your child to narrate.**

“Then, she may read two or three pages, enough to include an episode; after

“He should be trained from the first to think that one reading of any lesson is enough to enable him to narrate what he has read.”

## Notes

that, let her call upon the children to narrate,—in turns, if there be several of them. They not only narrate with spirit and accuracy, but succeed in catching the style of their author” (Vol. 1, p. 233).

“Literature at its best is always direct and simple and a normal child of six listens with delight to the tales both of Old and New Testament read to him passage by passage, and by him narrated in turn, with delightful touches of native eloquence” (Vol. 6, p. 160).

### **6. Make sure the book is interesting and enjoyable to your child.**

“The book should always be deeply interesting” (Vol. 1, p. 233).

“The children must enjoy the book. The ideas it holds must each make that sudden, delightful impact upon their minds, must cause that intellectual stir, which mark the inception of an idea” (Vol. 3, p. 178).

### **7. Read through the book consecutively, not just excerpts here and there.**

“In every case the reading should be consecutive from a well-chosen book” (Vol. 1, p. 232).

### **8. Avoid asking direct questions on the subject-matter of the reading; have your child narrate instead.**

“Direct questions on the subject-matter of what a child has read are always a mistake. Let him *narrate* what he has read, or some part of it. He enjoys this sort of consecutive reproduction, but abominates every question in the nature of a riddle. If there must be riddles, let it be his to ask and the teacher’s to direct him the answer” (Vol. 1, p. 228).

“The points to be borne in mind are, that he should have no book which is not a child’s classic; and that, given the right book, it must not be diluted with talk or broken up with questions, but given to the boy in fit proportions as wholesome meat for his mind, in the full trust that a child’s mind is able to deal with its proper food” (Vol. 1, p. 232).

“A *single reading* is insisted on, because children have naturally great power of attention; but this force is dissipated by the re-reading of passages, and also, by questioning, summarising, and the like” (Vol. 6, Preface).

“Long ago, I was in the habit of hearing this axiom quoted by a philosophical old friend:—“The mind can know nothing save what it can produce in the form of an answer to a question put to the mind by itself.” I have failed to trace the saying to its source, but a conviction of its importance has been growing upon me during the last forty years. It tacitly prohibits questioning from without; (this does not, of course, affect the Socratic use of questioning for purposes of *moral* conviction); and it is necessary to intellectual certainty, to the act of knowing. For example, to secure a conversation or an incident, we ‘go over it in our minds’; that is, the mind puts itself through the process of self-questioning which I have indicated” (Vol. 6, pp. 16, 17).

“The children must enjoy the book.”



## Notes

“Given a book of literary quality suitable to their age and children will know how to deal with it without elucidation. Of course they will not be able to answer questions because questions are an impertinence which we all resent, but they will tell you the whole thing with little touches of individual personality in the narrative” (Vol. 6, p. 260).

“Their knowledge should be tested, not by questions, but by the oral (and occasionally the written) reproduction of a passage after one reading” (Vol. 6, pp. 341, 342).

***9. Encourage your child to narrate by a genuinely-interested look or word, but be careful not to deluge him with a flood of talk.***

“The points to be borne in mind are, that he should have no book which is not a child’s classic; and that, given the right book, it must not be diluted with talk or broken up with questions, but given to the boy in fit portions as wholesome meat for his mind, in the full trust that a child’s mind is able to deal with its proper food” (Vol. 1, p. 232).

“The teacher’s part in this regard is to see and feel for himself, and then to rouse his pupils by an appreciative look or word; but to beware how he deadens the impression by a flood of talk. Intellectual sympathy is very stimulating; but we have all been in the case of the little girl who said, ‘Mother, I think I could understand if you did not explain *quite* so much.’ A teacher said of her pupil, ‘I find it so hard to tell whether she has really grasped a thing or whether she has only got the mechanical hang of it.’ Children are imitative monkeys, and it is the ‘mechanical hang’ that is apt to arrive after a douche of explanation” (Vol. 3, pp. 178, 179).

“The teacher’s own really difficult part is to keep up sympathetic interest by look and occasional word, by remarks upon a passage that has been narrated, by occasionally shewing pictures, and so on” (Vol. 6, p. 172).

“The teachers give the uplift of their sympathy in the work and where necessary elucidate, sum up or enlarge, but the actual work is done by the scholars” (Vol. 6, p. 241).

***10. Do not interrupt your child while he is narrating.***

“The teacher does not talk much and is careful never to interrupt a child who is called upon to ‘tell’ ” (Vol. 6, p. 172).

“Corrections must not be made during the act of narration, nor must any interruption be allowed” (Vol. 6, p. 191).

***11. Do not correct your child’s sentence structure or grammar during his narration.***

“It is not wise to tease them with corrections; they may begin with an endless chain of ‘ands,’ but they soon leave this off, and their narrations become good enough in style and composition to be put in a ‘print book!’” (Vol. 1, p. 233).

“Questions are an impertinence which we all resent.”

## Notes

*In Charlotte's foreign language classes, the children would narrate in the language they were learning.*

"The teacher does not talk much and is careful never to interrupt a child who is called upon to 'tell.'"

### *12. Correct any mistakes on content when the narration is over, not during the telling.*

"The teacher probably allows other children to correct any faults in the telling when it is over" (Vol. 6, p. 172).

"Corrections must not be made during the act of narration, nor must any interruption be allowed" (Vol. 6, p. 191).

### *13. In a group, you may call on children to take turns narrating.*

"Then, she may read two or three pages, enough to include an episode; after that, let her call upon the children to narrate,—in turns, if there be several of them" (Vol. 1, p. 233).

"Ask the children in turn to narrate, each narrating a part of what was read" (Vol. 3, p. 334).

"The time appropriated in the time-table at this stage to the teaching of some half-dozen more or less literary subjects such as Scripture, and the subjects I have indicated, is largely spent by the teachers in reading, say, two or three paragraphs at a time from some one of the set books, which children, here and there in the class, narrate" (Vol. 6, p. 244).

"As soon as the reading ended, on the instant, without hesitation of any kind, narration began in French, different members of the class taking up the story in turn till it was finished" (Vol. 6, p. 212).

### *14. After your child narrates, you may illustrate or elaborate on any lessons drawn from the reading.*

"When the narration is over, there should be a little talk in which moral points are brought out, pictures shown to illustrate the lesson, or diagrams drawn on the blackboard" (Vol. 1, p. 233).

"Then the teacher will read the Bible passage in question which the children will narrate, the commentary serving merely as a background for their thoughts. The narration is usually exceedingly interesting; the children do not miss a point and often add picturesque touches of their own. Before the close of the lesson, the teacher brings out such new thoughts of God or new points of behaviour as the reading has afforded, emphasising the moral or religious lesson to be learnt rather by a reverent and sympathetic manner than by any attempt at personal application" (Vol. 6, p. 163).

"The teachers give the uplift of their sympathy in the work and where necessary elucidate, sum up or enlarge, but the actual work is done by the scholars" (Vol. 6, p. 241).

### *15. Asking questions on a side issue or about personal opinion are fine.*

"Questions that lead to a side issue or to a personal view are allowable because

these interest children—“What would you have done in his place?” (Vol. 1, pp. 228, 229).

**16. Use other discussion points after the narration to make sure your child is reading intelligently, not just cramming the contents.**

“There is much difference between intelligent reading, which the pupil should do in silence, and a mere parrot-like cramming up of contents; and it is not a bad test of education to be able to give the points of a description, the sequence of a series of incidents, the links in a chain of argument, correctly, after a single careful reading. This is a power which a barrister, a publisher, a scholar, labours to acquire; and it is a power which children can acquire with great ease, and once acquired, the gulf is bridged which divides the reading from the non-reading community.

“But this is only *one* way to use books: others are to enumerate the statements in a given paragraph or chapter; to analyse a chapter, to divide it into paragraphs under proper headings, to tabulate and classify series; to trace cause to consequence and consequence to cause; to discern character and perceive how character and circumstance interact; to get lessons of life and conduct, or the living knowledge which makes for science, out of books; all this is possible for school boys and girls, and *until* they have begun to use books for themselves in such ways, they can hardly be said to have begun their education” (Vol. 3, p. 180).

“If it is desirable to ask questions in order to emphasize certain points, these should be asked after and not before, or during, the act of narration” (Vol. 6, p. 17).

**17. Look over the portion to be read ahead of time and note any discussion points that would be good to use to encourage mental discipline.**

“The teacher’s part is, in the first place, to see what is to be done, to look over the work of the day in advance and see what mental discipline, as well as what vital knowledge, this and that lesson afford; and then to set such questions and such tasks as shall give full scope to his pupils’ mental activity” (Vol. 3, pp. 180, 181).

**18. Teach your child to make neat marginal notes or underlines in his books.**

“Let marginal notes be freely made, as neatly and beautifully as may be, for books should be handled with reverence. Let numbers, letters, underlining be used to help the eye and to save the needless fag of writing abstracts” (Vol. 3, p. 181).

**19. Sometimes ask your child to write a few questions that cover the passage he read.**

“Let the pupil write for himself half a dozen questions which cover the passage studied; he need not write the answers if he be taught that the mind can know nothing but what it can produce in the form of an answer to a question put by the mind to itself” (Vol. 3, p. 181).

**20. Be careful that discussion points and mental disciplines like those mentioned above do not dampen your child’s relation with the living book itself.**

“These few hints by no means cover the disciplinary uses of a good school-book; but let us be careful that our disciplinary devices, and our mechanical devices to

## Notes

“There is much difference between intelligent reading, which the pupil should do in silence, and a mere parrot-like cramming up of contents.”

## Notes

*Short lessons in Charlotte's schools meant*  
*Grades 1–3: 15–20 minutes*  
*Grades 4–6: 20–30 minutes*  
*Grades 7–9: 30–45 minutes*

"The mind can know nothing but what it can produce in the form of an answer to a question put by the mind to itself."

secure and tabulate the substance of knowledge, do not come between the children and that which is the *soul* of the book, the living thought it contains. Science is doing so much for us in these days, nature is drawing so close to us, art is unfolding so much meaning to us, the world is becoming so rich for us, that we are a little in danger of neglecting the art of deriving sustenance from books. Let us not in such wise impoverish our lives and the lives of our children" (Vol. 3, p. 181).

### *21. The Bible should also be read and narrated, then discussed briefly.*

"Method of Bible Lessons.—The method of such lessons is very simple. Read aloud to the children a few verses covering, if possible, an episode. Read reverently, carefully, and with just expression. Then require the children to narrate what they have listened to as nearly as possible in the words of the Bible. It is curious how readily they catch the rhythm of the majestic and simple Bible English. Then, talk the narrative over with them in the light of research and criticism. Let the teaching, moral and spiritual, reach them without much personal application" (Vol. 1, p. 251).

"Read your Bible story to the child, bit by bit; get him to tell you in his own words (keeping as close as he can to the Bible words) what you have read, and then, if you like, talk about it; but not much. Above all, do not let us attempt a 'practical commentary on every verse in Genesis' to quote the title of a work lately published" (Vol. 2, p. 110).

"Read bit by bit (of the Old Testament anyway) to the children, as beautifully as may be, requiring them to tell the story, after listening, as nearly in the Bible words as they can" (Vol. 2, p. 112).

"Literature at its best is always direct and simple and a normal child of six listens with delight to the tales both of Old and New Testament read to him passage by passage, and by him narrated in turn, with delightful touches of native eloquence" (Vol. 6, p. 160).

"The knowledge of God is the principal knowledge, and no teaching of the Bible which does not further that knowledge is of religious value. Therefore the children read, or if they are too young to read for themselves the teacher reads to them, a passage of varying length covering an incident or some definite teaching. If there are remarks to be made about local geography or local custom, the teacher makes them before the passage has been read, emphasizing briefly but reverently any spiritual or moral truth; the children narrate what has been read after the reading; they do this with curious accuracy and yet with some originality, conveying the spiritual teaching which the teacher has indicated" (Vol. 6, p. 272).

### *22. Short lesson times should include the narration.*

"For this reason, reading lessons must be short; ten minutes or a quarter of an hour of fixed attention is enough for children of the ages we have in view, and a lesson of this length will enable a child to cover two or three pages of his book. The same rule as to the length of a lesson applies to children whose lessons are read to them because they are not yet able to read for themselves" (Vol. 1, p. 230).

“This sort of narration lesson should not occupy more than a quarter of an hour” (Vol. 1, p. 233).

**23. Use narration questions for end-of-term examinations—one or two on each book read during the term.**

“At the end of the term an examination paper is sent out containing one or two questions on each book. Here are a few of the answers. The children in the first two classes narrate their answers, which someone writes from their dictation” (Vol. 3, p. 272).

“These read in a term one, or two, or three thousand pages, according to their age, school and Form, in a large number of set books. The quantity set for each lesson allows of only a single reading; but the reading is tested by narration, or by writing on a test passage. When the terminal examination is at hand so much ground has been covered that revision is out of the question; what the children have read they know, and write on any part of it with ease and fluency, in vigorous English; they usually spell well” (Vol. 6, p. 6)

“Scholars should know their books, many pages in many books, at a single reading, in such a way that months later they can write freely and accurately on any part of the term’s reading” (Vol. 6, p. 7)

“Examination papers representing tens of thousands of children working in Elementary Schools, Secondary Schools and home schoolrooms have just passed under my eye. How the children have revelled in knowledge! and how good and interesting all their answers are! How well they spell on the whole and how well they write! We do not need the testimony of their teachers that the work of the term has been joyous; the verve with which the children tell what they know proves the fact. Every one of these children knows that there are hundreds of pleasant places for the mind to roam in” (Vol. 6, p. 45).

“Much use is made according to this method of the years from 6 to 8, during which children must learn to read and write; they get at the same time, however, a good deal of consecutive knowledge of history and geography, tale and fable, some of which at the end of the term they dictate in answer to questions and their answers form well-expressed little essays on the subjects they deal with” (Vol. 6, p. 244).

“Let the child . . . tell what he has read in whole or in part on the instant, and again, in an examination paper months later” (Vol. 6, p. 258).

**24. Knowing that he will have to narrate after a single reading helps your child put forth the effort to pay full attention.**

“We all stir our minds into action the better if there is an implied ‘must’ in the background; for children in class the ‘must’ acts through the *certainty* that they will be required to narrate or write from what they have read with no opportunity of ‘looking ‘up,’ or other devices of the idle. Children find the act of narrating so pleasurable in itself that urgency on the part of the teacher is seldom necessary” (Vol. 6, p. 17).

## Notes

*See pages 139–158 for these examples of end-of-term questions and narrations.*

*A Form is somewhat similar to a Grade.*

*Terms usually lasted about twelve weeks, so end-of-term exams occurred about three times per school year.*

**“What the children have read they know.”**

## Notes

“Children cannot tell what they have not seen with the mind’s eye.”

### *25. Seeing the story in his mind’s eye will help your child assimilate and remember the events of the reading.*

“Trusting to mind memory we visualise the scene, are convinced by the arguments, take pleasure in the turn the sentences and frame our own upon them; in fact that particular passage or chapter has been received into us and become a part of us just as literally as was yesterday’s dinner; nay, more so, for yesterday’s dinner is of little account tomorrow; but several months, perhaps years hence, we shall be able to narrate the passage we had, so to say, consumed and grown upon with all the vividness, detail and accuracy of the first telling” (Vol. 6, p. 173).

“Just so in their small degree do the children narrate; they see it all so vividly that when you read or hear their versions the theme is illuminated for you too” (Vol. 6, p. 182).

“Children cannot tell what they have not seen with the mind’s eye, which we know as imagination, and they cannot see what is not told in their books with some vividness and some grasp of the subject” (Vol. 6, p. 227).

### *26. Children narrate naturally if something interests them, and we can use this natural tendency as an educational tool.*

“Narrating is an *art*, like poetry-making or painting, because it is *there*, in every child’s mind, waiting to be discovered, and is not the result of any process of disciplinary education. A creative fiat calls it forth. ‘Let him narrate’; and the child narrates, fluently, copiously, in ordered sequence, with fit and graphic details, with a just choice of words, without verbosity or tautology, so soon as he can speak with ease. This amazing gift with which normal children are born is allowed to lie fallow in their education. Bobbie will come home with a heroic narrative of a fight he has seen between ‘Duke’ and a dog in the street. It is wonderful! He has seen everything, and he tells everything with splendid vigour in the true epic vein; but so ingrained is our contempt for children that we see nothing in this but Bobbie’s foolish childish way! Whereas here, if we have eyes to see and grace to build, is the ground-plan of his education” (Vol. 1, p. 231).

“That is how we all learn, we tell again, to ourselves if need be, the matter we wish to retain, the sermon, the lecture, the conversation. The method is as old as the mind of man, the distressful fact is that it has been made so little use of in general education” (Vol. 6, pp. 159, 160).

### *27. If you are reading from a book that contains parts that may need to be edited, read it aloud; do not give it to your child to read himself.*

“Where it is necessary to make omissions, as in the Old Testament narratives and Plutarch’s *Lives*, for example, it is better that the teacher should always read the lesson which is to be narrated” (Vol. 1, p. 233).

“We find Plutarch’s *Lives* exceedingly inspiring. These are read aloud by the teacher (with suitable omissions) and narrated with great spirit by the children” (Vol. 6, p. 185).

**28. Oral narration is good practice for public speaking.**

“Organising capacity, business habits, and some power of public speaking, should be a part of our fitness as citizens. To secure the power of speaking, I think it would be well if the habit of narration were more encouraged, in place of written composition. On the whole, it is more useful to be able to speak than to write, and the man or woman who is able to do the former can generally do the latter” (Vol. 3, p. 88).

“They will welcome the preparation for public speaking, an effort for which everyone must qualify in these days, which the act of narration offers” (Vol. 6, p. 124).

“The act of narrating what has been read might well be useful to boys who should be prepared for public speaking” (Vol. 6, p. 86).

**29. Narration is not parroting back or reciting from rote memory.**

“Narrations which are mere feats of memory are quite valueless” (Vol. 1, p. 289).

“But, it will be said, reading or hearing various books read, chapter by chapter, and then narrating or writing what has been read or some part of it,—all this is mere memory work. The value of this criticism may be readily tested; will the critic read before turning off his light a leading article from a newspaper, say, or a chapter from Boswell or Jane Austen, or one of Lamb’s Essays; then, will he put himself to sleep by narrating silently what he has read. He will not be satisfied with the result but he will find that in the act of narrating every power of his mind comes into play, that points and bearings which he had not observed are brought out; that the whole is visualized and brought into relief in an extraordinary way; in fact, that scene or argument has become a part of his personal experience; he *knows*, he has assimilated what he has read. *This is not memory work.* In order to memorise, we repeat over and over a passage or a series of points or names with the aid of such clues as we can invent; we do memorise a string of facts or words, and the new possession serves its purpose for a time, but it is not assimilated; its purpose being served, we know it no more. This is memory work by means of which examinations are passed with credit. I will not try to explain (or understand!) this power to memorise;—it has its subsidiary use in education, no doubt, but it must not be put in the place of the prime agent which is *attention*” (Vol. 6, p. 16).

**30. You’ll be able to tell whether your child has gained real knowledge or just information from his book by noting if his narrations demonstrate an ability to condense, illustrate, and narrate with freedom or if he simply parrots phrases from the passage.**

“Perhaps the chief function of a teacher is to distinguish information from knowledge in the acquisitions of his pupils. Because knowledge is power, the child who has got knowledge will certainly show power in dealing with it. He will recast, condense, illustrate, or narrate with vividness and with freedom in the arrangement of his words. The child who has got only information will write and speak in the

“That is how we all learn, we tell again, to ourselves if need be, the matter we wish to retain, the sermon, the lecture, the conversation.”

## Notes

stereotyped phrases of his text-book, or will mangle in his notes the words of his teacher” (Vol. 3, p. 225).

“Children shew the same surprising power of knowing, evinced by the one sure test,—they are able to ‘tell’ each work they have read not only with accuracy but with spirit and originality” (Vol. 6, p. 182).

### *31. Children’s personalities will show in their narrations; allow them to narrate in their own ways.*

“Indeed, it is most interesting to hear children of seven or eight go through a long story without missing a detail, putting every event in its right order. These narrations are never a slavish reproduction of the original. A child’s individuality plays about what he enjoys, and the story comes from his lips, not precisely as the author tells it, but with a certain spirit and colouring which express the narrator. By the way, it is very important that children should be allowed to narrate in their own way, and should not be pulled up or helped with words and expressions from the text” (Vol. 1, p. 289).

“Literature at its best is always direct and simple and a normal child of six listens with delight to the tales both of Old and New Testament read to him passage by passage, and by him narrated in turn, with delightful touches of native eloquence” (Vol. 6, p. 160).

“The narration is usually exceedingly interesting; the children do not miss a point and often add picturesque touches of their own” (Vol. 6, p. 163).

“Given a book of literary quality suitable to their age and children will know how to deal with it without elucidation. Of course they will not be able to answer questions because questions are an impertinence which we all resent, but they will tell you the whole thing with little touches of individual personality in the narrative” (Vol. 6, p. 260).

“They throw individuality into this telling back so that no two tell quite the same tale” (Vol. 6, p. 292).

### *32. Drawing a favorite scene is a form of narration.*

“History readings afford admirable material for narration, and children enjoy narrating what they have read or heard. They love, too, to make illustrations. Children who had been reading *Julius Caesar* (and also, Plutarch’s *Life*), were asked to make a picture of their favourite scene, and the results showed the extraordinary power of visualising which the little people possess. Of course that which they visualise, or imagine clearly, they know; it is a life possession” (Vol. 1, p. 292).

### *33. Acting out a favorite scene is a form of narration.*

“Children have other ways of expressing the conceptions that fill them when they are duly fed. They play at their history lessons, dress up, make tableaux, act scenes; or they have a stage, and their dolls act, while they paint the scenery and

“Narrations which are mere feats of memory are quite valueless.”



speak the speeches. There is no end to the modes of expression children find when there is anything in them to express” (Vol. 1, p. 294).

“Children are born poets, and they dramatise all the life they see about them, after their own hearts, into an endless play. There is no reason why this natural gift should not be pressed into the service of education. Indeed, it might be safe to go further: the child who does not dramatise his lessons, who does not play at Richard and Saladin, who does not voyage with Captain Cook and excavate with Mr Flinders Petrie, is not learning. The knowledge he gets by heart is not assimilated and does not become part of himself.

“Therefore it is well that children should, at any rate, have the outlet of *narration*, that they should tell the things they know in full detail; and, when the humour takes them, ‘play’ the persons, act the scenes that interest them in their reading” (Vol. 5, pp. 305, 306).

***34. When your child is acting out a narration, be careful not to make the trappings of the presentation more important than the content.***

“On the other hand, there is the danger that their representation of facts may become more to them than the facts themselves, that the show of things may occupy their whole minds. For this reason it may be well not to indulge children with anything in the form of a stage or stage properties, not with so much as a puppet-show. They will find all they want in the chair which serves as a throne, the sofa which behaves as a ship, the ruler which plays the part of rapier, gun, or sceptre, as occasion demands. In fact, preoccupation with tawdry and trivial things will be avoided if children are let alone: imagination will furnish them with ample properties, delightful scenes, upon the merest suggestion of reality” (Vol. 5, p. 306).

***35. One criteria for selecting a book is whether your child can narrate it.***

“I have already spoken of the sorts of old chronicles upon which children should be nourished; but these are often too diffuse to offer good matter for narration, and it is well to have quite fitting short tales for this purpose” (Vol. 1, p. 289).

“The completeness with which hundreds of children reject the wrong book is a curious and instructive experience, not less so than the avidity and joy with which they drain the right book to the dregs; children’s requirements in the matter seem to be quantity, quality and variety: but the question of books is one of much delicacy and difficulty. After the experience of over a quarter of a century in selecting the lesson books proper to children of all ages, we still make mistakes, and the next examination paper discovers the error! Children cannot answer questions set on the wrong book; and the difficulty of selection is increased by the fact that what they like in books is no more a guide than what they like in food” (Vol. 6, p. 248).

***36. Narration requires your child to do the mental work and form his own relation with the book.***

“As we have already urged, there is but one right way, that is, children must do the work for themselves. They must read the given pages and tell what they have read, they must perform, that is, what we may call the *act of knowing*” (Vol. 6, p. 99).

## Notes

*For more forms of narration, read the Narration Ideas on page 175.*

“A narration should be original as it comes from the child—that is, his own mind should have acted upon the matter it has received.”

## Notes

*Yes, narration is a natural skill that most children use, but it may take time to transition from using that skill whenever desired to employing it purposefully for education.*

**“That which they visualise, or imagine clearly, they know; it is a life possession.”**

“This, of getting ideas out of them, is by no means all we must do with books. ‘In all labour there is profit,’ at any rate in some labour; and the labour of thought is what his book must induce in the child. He must generalise, classify, infer, judge, visualise, discriminate, labour in one way or another, with that capable mind of his, until the substance of his book is assimilated or rejected, according as he shall determine; for the determination rests with him and not with his teacher” (Vol. 3, p. 179).

“As for all the teaching in the nature of ‘told to the children,’ most children get their share of that whether in the infant school or at home, but this is practically outside the sphere of that part of education which demands a *conscious mental effort*, from the scholar, the mental effort of telling again that which has been read or heard” (Vol. 6, p. 159).

“While we grown-up persons read and forget because we do not take the pains to *know* as we read, these young students have the powers of perfect recollection and just application because they have read with attention and concentration and have in every case reproduced what they have read in narration, or, the gist of some portion of it, in writing” (Vol. 6, p. 185).

“The children, not the teachers, are the responsible persons; they do the work by self-effort.

“The teachers give the uplift of their sympathy in the work and where necessary elucidate, sum up or enlarge, but the actual work is done by the scholars” (Vol. 6, pp. 6, 241).

“They should read to know” (Vol. 6, p. 341).

### ***37. Give your child time to “hit his stride” in narrating.***

“It is not wise to tease them with corrections; they may begin with an endless chain of ‘ands,’ but they soon leave this off, and their narrations become good enough in style and composition to be put in a ‘print book!’” (Vol. 1, p. 233).

“The first efforts may be stumbling but presently the children get into their ‘stride’ and ‘tell’ a passage at length with surprising fluency” (Vol. 6, p. 172).

### ***38. Various students may narrate better in different subjects.***

“It rarely happens that all the children in a class are not able to answer all the questions set in such subjects as history, literature, citizenship, geography, science. But here differences manifest themselves; some children do better in history, some in science, some in arithmetic, others in literature; some, again, write copious answers and a few write sparsely; but practically all know the answers to the set questions” (Vol. 6, p. 241).

### ***39. Narration helps knowledge grow in your child, and therefore, is the chief part of education.***

“Here is an example of how such knowledge grows. I heard a class of girls aged about thirteen read an essay on George Herbert. Three or four of his poems

## Notes

were included, and none of the girls had read either essay or poems before. They 'narrated' what they had read and in the course of their narration gave a full paraphrase of *The Elixir*, *The Pulley*, and one or two other poems. No point made by the poet was omitted and his exact words were used pretty freely. The teacher made comments upon one or two unusual words and that was all; to explain or enforce (otherwise than by a reverently sympathetic manner, the glance and words that showed that she too, cared), would have been impertinent. It is an interesting thing that hundreds of children of this age in Secondary and Elementary Schools and in families scattered over the world read and narrated the same essay and no doubt paraphrased the verses with equal ease. I felt humbled before the children knowing myself incapable of such immediate and rapid apprehension of several pages of new matter including poems whose intention is by no means obvious. In such ways the great thoughts of great thinkers illuminate children and they grow in knowledge, chiefly the knowledge of God.

"And yet this, the chief part of education, is drowned in torrents of talk, in tedious repetition, in objurgation and recrimination, in every sort of way in which the mind may be bored and the affections deadened" (Vol. 6, pp. 64, 65).

"Now this art of telling back is *Education* and is very enriching. We all practise it, we go over in our minds the points of a conversation, a lecture, a sermon, an article, and we are so made that only those ideas and arguments which we go over are we able to retain. Desultory reading or hearing is entertaining and refreshing, but is only educative here and there as our attention is strongly arrested. Further, we not only retain but realise, understand, what we thus go over. Each incident stands out, every phrase acquires new force, each link in the argument is riveted, in fact we have performed THE ACT OF KNOWING, and that which we have read, or heard, becomes a part of ourselves, it is assimilated after the due rejection of waste matter" (Vol. 6, p. 292).

"The child must read to know; his teacher's business is to see that he knows. All the acts of generalization, analysis, comparison, judgment, and so on, the mind performs for itself in the act of knowing. If we doubt this, we have only to try the effect of putting ourselves to sleep by relating silently and carefully, say, a chapter of Jane Austen or a chapter of the Bible, read once before going to bed. The degree of insight, the visualization, that comes with this sort of mental exercise is surprising" (Vol. 6, p. 304).

#### 40. *You may want to memorize these summary mottos.*

"A few pedagogic maxims should help us, such as, 'Do not explain,' 'Do not question,' 'Let one reading of a passage suffice,' 'Require the pupil to relate the passage he has read' " (Vol. 6, p. 304).

### *Grades 1–3*

#### 41. *Do not require narrations from children younger than six years old.*

"Until he is six, let Bobbie narrate only when and what he has a mind to. He must not be called upon to *tell* anything. Is this the secret of the strange long talks we watch with amusement between creatures of two, and four, and five? Is it possible

"The labour of thought is what his book must induce in the child."

## Notes

that they narrate while they are still inarticulate, and that the other inarticulate person takes it all in? They try us, poor dear elders, and we reply ‘Yes,’ ‘Really!’ ‘Do you think so?’ to the babble of whose meaning we have no comprehension. Be this as it may; of what goes on in the dim region of ‘under two’ we have no assurance. But wait till the little fellow has words and he will ‘tell’ without end to whomsoever will listen to the tale, but, for choice, to his own compeers” (Vol. 1, pp. 231, 232).

### *42. Until your child can read fluently for himself, read aloud his books to him and have him narrate.*

“When the child is six, not earlier, let him narrate the fairy-tale which has been read to him, episode by episode, upon one hearing of each; the Bible tale read to him in the words of the Bible; the well-written animal story; or all about other lands from some such volume as *The World at Home*. The seven-years-old boy will have begun to read for himself, but must get most of his intellectual nutriment, by ear, certainly, but read to him out of books” (Vol. 1, p. 232).

“Literature at its best is always direct and simple and a normal child of six listens with delight to the tales both of Old and New Testament read to him passage by passage, and by him narrated in turn, with delightful touches of native eloquence” (Vol. 6, p. 160).

“Our plan in each of these subjects is to read him the passage for the lesson (a good long passage), talk about it a little, avoiding much explanation, and then let him narrate what has been read. This he does very well and with pleasure, and is often happy in catching the style as well as the words of the author” (Vol. 3, p. 272).

“Children cannot of course themselves read a book which is by no means written down to the ‘child’s level’ so the teacher reads and the children ‘tell’ paragraph by paragraph, passage by passage” (Vol. 6, p. 172).

### *43. Start by having your child narrate paragraphs, then gradually move to whole chapters.*

“For this reason, reading lessons must be short; ten minutes or a quarter of an hour of fixed attention is enough for children of the ages we have in view, and a lesson of this length will enable a child to cover two or three pages of his book” (Vol. 1, p. 230).

“The simplest way of dealing with a paragraph or a chapter is to require the child to narrate its contents after a single attentive reading” (Vol. 3, p. 179).

“Children cannot of course themselves read a book which is by no means written down to the ‘child’s level’ so the teacher reads and the children ‘tell’ paragraph by paragraph, passage by passage” (Vol. 6, p. 172).

“Form IA (7 to 9) hears and tells chapter by chapter” (Vol. 6, p. 180).

“The child must read to know; his teacher’s business is to see that he knows.”

## Notes

“Probably young children should be allowed to narrate paragraph by paragraph, while children of seven or eight will ‘tell’ chapter by chapter” (Vol. 6, p. 191).

“The time appropriated in the time-table at this stage to the teaching of some half-dozen more or less literary subjects such as Scripture, and the subjects I have indicated, is largely spent by the teachers in reading, say, two or three paragraphs at a time from some one of the set books, which children, here and there in the class, narrate” (Vol. 6, p. 244).

*44. Children under nine may occasionally be asked to write part of their narration or to write a short account of something familiar to them.*

“For children under nine, the question of composition resolves itself into that of narration, varied by some such simple exercise as to write a part and narrate a part, or write the whole account of a walk they have taken, a lesson they have studied, or of some simple matter that they know” (Vol. 1, p. 247).

*45. Record your child’s narration in writing as he tells, if desired.*

“Children of six can tell to amazing purpose. The grown-up who writes the tale to their ‘telling’ will cover many pages before getting to the end of ‘Hans and Gretel’ or ‘The Little Match Girl’ or a Bible story. The facts are sure to be accurate and the expression surprisingly vigorous, striking and unhesitating” (Vol. 6, p. 190).

“The children in the first two classes narrate their answers, which someone writes from their dictation” (Vol. 3, p. 272).

*Grades 4–12*

*46. As soon as your child can read fluently, transition to having him read the books himself and narrate them.*

“As soon as children are able to read with ease and fluency, they read their own lesson, either aloud or silently, with a view to narration” (Vol. 1, p. 233).

*Older children do more written narrations. See page 70 for details.*

## Questions to Ask about Narration

### *General Guidelines for All Grades*

- Am I having my child show what he knows by narrating what he has read or heard?
- Do I require him to narrate after only one reading?
- Am I using pre-reading review narrations?
- Do I write key names or words from the reading on a small whiteboard or sheet of paper for my child to look at during the reading and narration?
- Am I trying to read a full episode?

“Do not explain, Do not question, Let one reading of a passage suffice, Require the pupil to relate the passage he has read.”

## Notes

“The simplest way of dealing with a paragraph or a chapter is to require the child to narrate its contents after a single attentive reading.”

- Am I making sure the books are interesting and enjoyable to my child?
- Am I being careful to read through books consecutively, rather than random excerpts?
- Am I not asking direct questions on the content of the reading?
- Am I trying to encourage my child who is narrating by giving a genuinely-interested look or word?
- Am I being careful not to flood my child with my own thoughts and talk on the passage?
- Am I remembering not to interrupt my child when he is narrating?
- Am I trying not to correct my child's sentence structure or grammar during his narration?
- Do I wait until after my child is done narrating before I correct any mistakes on the passage's content?
- Am I allowing the children to take turns narrating in a group?
- Do I illustrate or elaborate on any lessons drawn from the reading after my child has finished narrating?
- Do I sometimes ask questions on a side issue or to gather my child's opinion?
- Am I occasionally using discussion points after the narration to make sure my child is reading intelligently?
- Am I looking over the passage ahead of time to find any discussion points that would be good to use?
- Am I teaching my child to make neat marginal notes or underlines in his books as appropriate?
- Do I sometimes ask my child to write a few questions that cover the passage he read?
- Am I being careful that any discussion points do not dampen my child's relation with the living book itself?
- Am I including the Bible as a book to be read, narrated, and discussed?
- Am I allowing time for narrations within the short lesson time period?
- Am I using one or two narration questions per book for end-of-term examinations?
- Am I consistently asking for narration in order to help my child pay full attention to a single reading?
- Do I encourage my child to see the story in his mind's eye as it is read?
- Do I understand how narration is a natural skill for most children?
- Am I reading aloud, editing, and keeping in my possession any books that may have inappropriate parts for my child?
- Do I understand how oral narration is good practice for public speaking?
- Am I satisfied that narration lays the groundwork for and provides practice in composition?
- Am I encouraging my child to occasionally write his narration as poetry?
- Do I understand that narrating is not the same as reciting from rote memory?
- Am I able to tell how well my child has assimilated the passage by the freedom he shows in narrating it?
- Am I encouraging my child to express his personality in his narrations?

*Notes*

- Do I sometimes have my child draw or act a favorite scene from the reading as narration?
- Am I being careful to make the content of the acted narration more important than the set, costumes, or other trappings?
- Am I willing to replace a book that my child cannot narrate?
- Am I requiring my child to do the work himself and form his own relation with the book?
- Am I trying to be patient, calm, and encouraging until my child “hits his stride” in narrating?
- Do I understand that some students may narrate better in some subjects?
- Am I making narration a chief part of my child’s education?
- Can I narrate or recite the four mottoes for a lesson with narration?

*Grades 1–3*

- Am I careful not to require a narration from any child younger than six years old?
- Am I reading aloud the lesson books for my less-than-fluent reader?
- Am I allowing my child to start with narrating paragraphs until he is ready to move to longer passages?
- Do I occasionally ask a child younger than nine years old to write a part of his narration or a short account of something that is familiar to him?
- Do I occasionally write or type my child’s narration as he tells it?

*Grades 4–12*

- Do I have my fluent reader read his lesson books for himself?

**More Quotes on Narration**

Let us tenderly and kindly cherish, therefore, the means of knowledge. Let us dare to read, think, speak, and write.—John Adams

Knowledge which is acquired under compulsion obtains no hold on the mind.—Plato

We ought to be ten times as hungry for knowledge as for food for the body.—Henry Ward Beecher

“Information is not knowledge.”—Albert Einstein

“Children of six can tell to amazing purpose.”

