



### PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE

As parents, our task is to raise our children to become well-rounded adults. To homeschool properly, begin with the end in mind. Just like you should first decide a destination before you chart a course, you should first imagine what kind of person you want your child to become before figuring out how to educate him or her. Sketch a detailed portrait of your child as an adult and fix that image in your mind. Ask yourself these questions:

- What kind of person should my child become?
- What should my child know and be able to do by the time he is ready to leave the house?
- What kind of qualities should he have, and what kind of habits should he practice as an adult?

The more specific you can be in answering these questions, the better. The more clarity and detail you can add to the portrait of your child as an adult, the more likely he or she is to become that kind of person. You should write your vision down. To fill out your vision, make a list of things to know, skills to learn, and habits to practice.

#### THINGS TO KNOW

- We are what we love.
- It's not fair to compare.
- Fair doesn't mean equal.
- Gratitude not expressed is no gratitude at all.
- You don't always get what you want.
- Good things take time.
- A place for everything and everything in its place.
- Nothing beautiful comes without a fight.
- Slow is smooth, and smooth is fast.
- Experience is the best teacher.

#### SKILLS TO LEARN

- Prepare a meal for six.
- Set a table.
- Change a flat tire.
- Change engine oil.
- Patch a tear.
- Train a horse or dog.
- Maintain a budget.
- Apply for a job.
- Clean the bathroom.
- Do laundry.
- Mow the lawn.
- Sow a field.
- Plant a garden.
- Design a PowerPoint.
- Produce an Excel spreadsheet.

#### HABITS TO PRACTICE

- Keep a journal.
- Exercise regularly.
- Follow a healthy routine.
- Be where you are.
- Practice mindfulness.
- Give thanks.
- Nurture friendships.
- Give to charity.
- Listen carefully.
- Write thank you notes.
- Eat healthily.
- Zero your inbox.
- Set boundaries.
- Say what you mean.
- Work first, play later.
- Love wastefully.

### RECOMMENDED READING LISTS

Encourage your children to become readers. In a national study, researchers discovered the two factors that are most likely to determine whether a child becomes an avid reader: The first and foremost, there are books readily available in the house; and the second, their parents read to them. So, collect books. Get a library card. Visit the used bookstore. Put books on the lower shelf in hands reach. Read books aloud to your children or play audio books for them. Get your children to read books. Good books. The books that you loved as a child. The books that appeal to them. The books related to activities on the farm that interest them.

## BOOK LISTS

- [The Newberry Medal](#) winners from 1922 to the present
- [The Caldecott Award](#) winners from 1938 to the present
- [Good Reads](#) posts multiple book lists for children of all ages and according to varied themes and interests.
- [Classical Academic Press](#) publishes *The Classical Reader*, a hardcopy comprehensive reading guide for children ages 5 to 18, including reading lists specific to each grade level. \$9.95
- [The Classical Reader](#), a website powered by Classical Academic Press, includes a parent approved, classically vetted list of books for all ages.

## NARRATION

A proven reading comprehension strategy conceived by Charlotte Mason, **narration** requires the reader to re-present in speech or in writing the content of a passage after a single reading. Different from summarizing, narrating is an activity whereby the reader must recount the detail of the passage in the order it is presented using the syntax of the author. The strategy habituates attention and, therefore, comprehension. Furthermore, the imitation of good writers fosters proficiency with the craft. For variety, the reader might practice narration using [multiple methods](#).

## FURTHER READING

- [Know and Tell](#) by Karen Glass
- [A Classical Guide to Narration](#) by Jason Barney
- [Charlotte Mason Companion](#) by Karen Andriola

## PIGFESTING

A tradition with a long, distinguished history as old as the Founding Fathers, the **pigfest** is a gathering to enjoy good food and good conversation about important ideas. At a pigfest, each participant arrives with a debatable proposition to present and defend to the group. Examples include: (a) The government should subsidize regenerative farming practices; (b) People should buy and promote Fair Trade Certified coffee; and (c) Schools should ban cell phone use during school hours. During discussion, participants must observe three rules: (1) Participants are expected to be hard on ideas but not on people; (2) any participant may invoke the devil's rule to stimulate conversation; and (3) apathy is strictly prohibited.

To start pigfesting on the farm, get your children to fish for a debatable proposition from their reading. Depending on their reading, perhaps your children argue for the best methods to attract more wildlife onto the property. They might argue for the addition of a pasture pig to dispose of food waste and manage the forest. Or they may argue for rotational grazing to restore soil health. Propositions do not need to be limited to farm operations, of course. Get your children to defend a proposal related to politics after reading a news article, about theology after reading a Pauline epistle, or about history after reading a biography. The possibilities are endless. To improve the conversation, get your children to prepare a written defense of their proposal, which they must present to the family to begin the conversation.

## COMMONPLACING

A **commonplace book** is a notebook in which your children record important passages from their reading – passages they love and want to remember. The act of recording the passage in the commonplace book reinforces the memory thereof, as does the act of rereading entries again in the future. The commonplace book becomes for your children a repository of memory, a sourcebook of ideas, and a compilation of treasured passages and meaningful quotations. Get your children to divide their commonplace book into three sections: (1) *Truth* for preserving passages about great ideas, (2) *Goodness* for recording passages about virtue, and (3) *Beauty* for keeping treasured passages, especially poetry. Then encourage them to fill their commonplace books with their reading. Get your children to add their own commentary or thoughts about each entry – the meaning of the passage, the importance or impact of the idea, or even how the passage relates to the farm.

### FURTHER READING

- [How to Make a Commonplace Book](#) by John Ahern
- [A Brief Guide to Keeping a Commonplace Book](#) by Ashley Watson

## JOURNALING

Get your children to keep a journal. Not only does journaling improve memory, but the practice also invigorates the mind. Give your children a bank of prompts to generate ideas for journal entries until they develop independence with the practice. Prompts can include I learned that, I remembered that, I noticed that, I wonder, I wish. They can explain the meaning of a maxim or a proverb, defend a statement or claim, praise someone or something, or record a stream of consciousness. The scope of subjects can span from agriculture to astronomy, from art to science. The possibilities are endless.

### JOURNAL PROMPTS

- I learned...
- I remember...
- I wonder...
- What if...?
- I noticed...
- I love...
- I am thankful for...
- Someday, I would like to...
- When I grow up...
- I regret...
- I miss...
- I am sorry that...
- I enjoy...
- I read that...
- I discovered...
- I dislike...
- I should...
- *Explain a maxim or proverb.*
- If I could do things differently...
- I resolve...
- I feel...
- I think...
- *Pose a question.*
- What does the Bible say about...?
- God showed me...
- Why do we...?
- I wish...
- What do others think about...?
- *Support a claim.*
- Love inspires me to...
- I was encouraged when...
- God is good because...
- *Praise someone or something.*
- I repent of...
- I pray...
- I respect...
- I never want to forget...
- I can...
- If I were born in...
- I can do *this* for...
- If I went the second mile...
- If I loved my enemy, then...
- I was hurt by...
- Mistakes were made...
- Has anyone ever...
- *This is (un)like that...*
- How might Jesus think or feel about...?
- *Write a poem.*
- I improved...
- I imagine...
- I believe...
- *Record a stream of thoughts.*
- Back then...
- I know...
- It is wise/foolish to...
- Upon reflection...
- If I was like Jesus...