

The Joy of Classical Education: Introduction to Classical Education at Home

Audio Workshop Conference Handout

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Some of this material is adapted from [The Well-Trained Mind: A Guide to Classical Education at Home](#), which contains more detailed information on the topic.

Workshop Overview

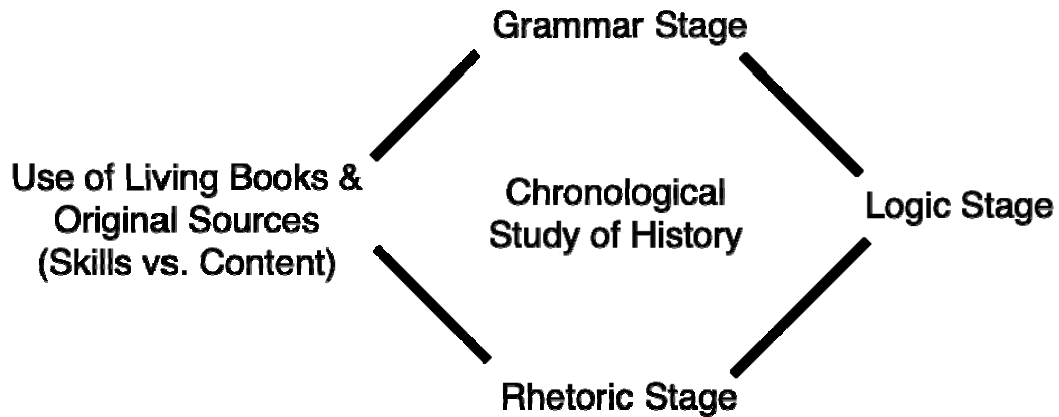
The most straightforward introduction to classical education around! Susan Wise Bauer provides an overview of the philosophy of classical education and the ways in which homeschoolers can pursue classical learning at home.

This audio workshop covers the distinctive characteristics of classical education, the benefits to the student, the three stages of classical learning, the subjects taught in each stage, and the overall goals of classical education. Susan Wise Bauer discusses the place of delight-led learning, and offers ways which every homeschooler can borrow from the classical tradition.

The Foundation: Principles of Teaching

- Language intensive (reflective, not reactive)
- Trains the mind to learn
- Demands self discipline

Four Walls and a Roof



The Grammar Stage

Elementary school years, roughly grades 1-4. The years in which the building blocks for learning are laid.

Characteristics

Strengths: The mind is ready to absorb information. Memorization is fun and generally easy

Weaknesses: Undeveloped capacity for abstract or critical thought

Needs: Order in chaos, stability in uncertainty.

What to Teach/Learn

- Reading: Lay a good foundation of phonics; establish the habit of reading
- Spelling: Study of rules
- Grammar: Basic usage and mechanics
- Writing: Summaries
- Mathematics (arithmetic): basic math facts and concepts
- Literature: “What happened?”
- Science: Exploration of the scientific disciplines

The Logic Stage

Middle school years, roughly grades 5-8. The development of analytical thinking skills and abstract thought.

Characteristics

Strengths: Developing ability for abstraction and criticism

Weaknesses: Immature exercise of those skills

Needs: Control, order, the ability to predict and plan

What to Teach/Learn

- Logic: Learn to evaluate the validity of arguments
- Literature: Begin to ask questions about characters, plots, motivations, techniques
- Spelling: Increasing application of rules to written work
- Grammar: Diagramming and outlining

- Writing: Outlining and using outlines for compositions
- Mathematics: Move toward abstraction (pre-algebra, algebra)
- History: Focus on cause and effect, on chronology, and on relationships between countries
- Science: Experimentation of the scientific disciplines

The Rhetoric Stage

High school years, roughly grades 9-12. Learning to write and speak with force and originality

Characteristics

Development of a specialty. Use of Great Books rather than textbooks

Needs: Sense of identity based on uniqueness of skills, opinions, personality

What to Teach/Learn

- Rhetoric: Learn the rules of effective communication
- Literature: Grapple with the central ideas
- Grammar: Continue to reinforce proper usages
- Writing: Original compositions intended to persuade
- Mathematics: Advanced abstract work
- History: Use original sources to ask how people understood their own times
- Science: Develop an understanding of the historical development of the scientific disciplines as well as their content and rules

Where possible, use living books and original sources. (Distinction: skills vs. content.)

History at the Core of the Classical Curriculum

Three repetitions of the same four-year pattern:

Ancients	6000 BC - AD 400
Medieval / Early Renaissance	400-1600
Late Renaissance / Early Modern	1600-1850
Modern	1850 to the present

Grades 1-4: Concentrate on stories and biographies

Grades 5-8: Use timelines and begin to use original sources

Grades 9-12: Focus on original sources and Great Books

Literature: Done along with history in the same 4-year pattern

It is absurd that a man should be ashamed of the inability to defend himself with his limbs, but not ashamed of inability to defend himself with speech and reason; for the use of rational speech is more distinctive of a human being than the use of his limbs.

