

Charlotte Mason's Guidelines for Living Books

□ SHOULD INSPIRE STUDENTS WITH IDEAS

"Education is a life. That life is sustained on ideas. Ideas are of spiritual origin, and God has made us so that we get them chiefly as we convey them to one another, whether by word of mouth, written page, Scripture word, musical symphony; but we must sustain a child's inner life with ideas as we sustain his body with food." (Vol 6)



□ MUST BE OF THE BEST QUALITY OF WRITING

"One more thing is of vital importance; children must have books, living books; the best are not too good for them; anything less than the best is not good enough; and if it is needful to exercise economy, let go everything that belongs to soft and luxurious living before letting go the duty of supplying the books, and the frequent changes of books, which are necessary for the constant stimulation of the child's intellectual life." (Vol 2)

□ MUST BE INSPIRING WELL-TOLD TALES WITH LITERARY POWER

NOT DILUTED OR TWADDLE (trivial or foolish speech or writing; nonsense)

"For the children? They must grow up upon the best. There must never be a period in their lives when they are allowed to read or listen to twaddle or reading-made-easy. There is never a time when they are unequal to worthy thoughts, well put; inspiring tales, well told. Let Blake's 'Songs of Innocence' represent their standard in poetry; De Foe and Stevenson, in prose; and we shall train a race of readers who will demand literature—that is, the fit and beautiful expression of inspiring ideas and pictures of life." (Vol 2)

□ SHOULD NOT BE SECOND-RATE, STALE OR PREDICTABLE

"It is not possible to repeat this too often or too emphatically, for perhaps we err more in this respect than any other in bringing up children. We feed them upon the white ashes out of which the last spark of the fire of original thought has long since died. We give them second-rate story books, with stale phrases, stale situations, shreds of other people's thoughts, stalest of stale sentiments. They complain that they know how the story will end! But that is not all; they know how every dreary page will unwind itself" (Vol 3).

□ CHILDREN MUST ENJOY WHAT THEY READ

"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)

HOWEVER...

"That children like feeble and tedious...story books, does not at all prove that these are wholesome food; they like lollipops but cannot live upon them." (Vol 6)

