

Charlotte Mason

Charlotte Mason, an innovative British educator who lived at the turn of the century, was educated primarily at home by her parents. Many homeschoolers have adopted her methodologies, finding them to coincide with the natural way children grow and learn. Although Charlotte Mason was a Christian, she believed that her principles and methods could be emulated successfully by secular parents as well.

Ms. Mason believed, first and foremost, that there is no higher calling than the God-given responsibility to raise children. She believed not that children were created as 'blank slates,' but instead, they were little people created in the image of God and worthy of respect.

According to Charlotte, our responsibilities as parents included having a vision of who our children were to become. Having this vision in mind helped parents see the 'entire child' and keep character training and education in balance, instead of letting one thing become important to the extent that the other is sacrificed. She suggested that educational methods should help our children grow into who God designed them to be – not only for the purpose of being a blessing to us, as parents, but also to society as a whole.



Charlotte Mason painted in 1902 by Frederic Yates

Miss Mason's Beliefs

Miss Mason believed, as expressed in Volume 1 of her Original Homeschooling Series, that there were natural spiritual laws that directed how children were best raised. These principles included:

- Parents are to model and teach a love, respect for and trust in God.
- Children have an innate, God-given sense of right and wrong. We strengthen that when we hold children to high standards of behavior, rather than indulging them and laughing at their misbehaviors when they are small. We are to teach them that right behavior is expected, because it is right, not merely to fulfill our personal parental preferences.

- It is our responsibility as parents to model and teach our children habits of self-discipline, self-control, and self-motivation. These are to be instilled so thoroughly that children automatically and habitually obey correctly, rather than constantly be faced with the decision to choose the right course of action or one less admirable.
- The most important habits to cultivate early are moral habits (doing what is right) and the habit of focused attention, both which will prepare children for educational training later.
- Children, especially before the age of six, are to spend as much time as possible outside learning to enjoy, appreciate, observe and describe nature.

Charlotte's Practical Methods

In Volume 6 of Charlotte's Original Homeschooling Series, she describes in detail her beliefs and outlines, per age level, her practical teaching methods. We list a few of her most common tenets which are also incorporated into Epi Kardia/Train up a Child Publishing curriculum:

1. Children should learn as many subjects as possible using whole, living books. Living books are engaging books written by those who have a passion for a subject, rather than poorly-written, 'dumbed-down' versions.
2. Lessons should be short in duration and vary in location. Lessons are enhanced by being outdoors when possible, especially for younger children.
3. History is best studied using whole books to read biographies and literature about people and events, rather than just by memorizing dry facts and dates.
4. Grammar and composition are best learned by children when they are old enough to grasp these abstract ideas, (third/fourth grade*) and best taught by continued narration, dictation and copywork.

*Although in our Daily Lesson Plans we do introduce end punctuation and other grammar and composition concepts, it is just that - an introduction. We leave it up to parents to decide when their children are ready for mastery.
5. Composition before this time should be primarily in the form of oral narration and is best incorporated into the studies of history, geography and science.
6. Narration over reading is an optimal way to train children's minds to recall details, organize thoughts, increase memory function and aid in developing competent communication skills.
7. Fine arts should be an integral part of children's curriculum: Art, music, literature, and architecture produced within an historical period are best studied within the context of that period.
8. Science is best studied using whole books as well as what is directly experienced in nature, using field guides to help children to observe, sketch, identify and record in their nature notebooks what they encounter.

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[If you are interested in reading the series](#), it is currently available at Amazon.com.

The primary source for this article was Leslie Lario's Charlotte Mason Summaries.

Charlotte Mason's Original Homeschooling Series:

[Volume 1 - Home Education](#)

[Volume 2 - Parents and Children](#)

[Volume 3 - School Education](#)

[Volume 4 - Ourselves](#)

[Volume 5 - Formation of Character](#)

[Volume 6 - Towards a Philosophy of Education](#)

Books about her Teaching Philosophy

Other than Miss Mason's own words, these are my favorite books about her teaching philosophy and methodology.

[A Charlotte Mason Companion](#), by Karen Andreola

[A Charlotte Mason Education – a Home Schooling How-to Manual](#), by Catherine Levison

Dana Wilson

Dana Wilson is the owner of Train up a Child Publishing (formerly Epi Kardia), specializing in literature-based homeschool curriculum using Charlotte Mason methods, written from a Christian worldview. TUACP provides curricula for Kindergarten through 12th grade and is used by homeschool families as well as private Christian schools. She and her husband have raised two children who successfully attended college and graduate school.

Read more from Dana at the Train up a Child Publishing Blog. This article may be reprinted in its entirety, as long as it is accompanied by this information.

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