

Charlotte Mason on Studying History

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Charlotte Mason felt a study of history was it vital to an educated and “sane” mind. For the elementary years, she recommended a chronological study of history. During the teen years students benefited from a study of history with a thematic or topical approach. Here are a few of Charlotte Mason’s thoughts on the teaching of history to consider:

- **The “why” of studying history:** “It is a great thing to possess a pageant of history in the background of one’s thoughts. We may not be able to recall this or that circumstance, but ‘the imagination is warmed’. ” *Philosophy of Education (POE)*, p. 178.

- **On living history books:** “We must read history and think about it to understand (that) ...we owe



Photographer Kevin Connors Agency MorgueFile

a great debt of gratitude to the historians ... who call in I m a g i n a t i o n to picture for them the men and events of the past...so that everything seemed to take place again before their eyes,

and they were able to write of it for us. But their seeing and writing is not of much use to us unless, in our case, Lord.

Intellect invites Imagination to go forth with him, and we think of things and figure them to ourselves until at last they are real and alive to us.” *Ourselves*, p. 37

- **On a course of study:** “...no youth should go to college without (a) rudimentary course of English, European, and, especially, French history.” *POE*, p. 177.

- **On visiting historical sites:** “Possibly there is no sounder method of inculcating a sane and serviceable patriotism than this of making children familiar with the monuments of the great.” *POE*, p. 174.

- **On the need for a comprehensive program:** “Perhaps the gravest defect in school curricula is that they fail to give a comprehensive, intelligent and interesting introduction to history. To leave off or even to begin with the history of our own country is fatal. We cannot live sanely unless we know that other peoples are as we are with a difference, that they too have been represented by their poets and artists, that they too have their literature and their national life.” *POE*, p. 178.