

Methods of Education

Numerous models and methods of education are popular today, including the Charlotte Mason method, classical, eclectic, traditional textbooks, unit studies, unschooling, and so on. I like to look at methods of education this way: Each method is a toolbox that holds together your plans and preferences for school.

With that thought in mind, *The Mystery of History* series is not a toolbox at all—but rather a multifaceted tool that can be added to *any* toolbox! Whether you are a relaxed unschooler, a traditionalist, a classicist, a Charlotte Mason enthusiast, or a compilation of many styles, *The Mystery of History* can be an effective part of your method. The series can stand alone or serve as a spine for your other studies in homeschool, private school, co-op, or other types of education.

In particular, *The Mystery of History* strongly lines up with both a classical approach to education and the Charlotte Mason method. It also complements some of the ideas of Benjamin Bloom. For these reasons, I want to share more about these methods and ideas for those who are just beginning to identify their models of education.

Classical Education

A classical education is language-centered, which means that students do great volumes of *reading*, *listening*, and *writing* to learn. Furthermore, a classical education observes three stages of training the mind. The three-stage process is called the trivium of learning.

Stage 1 is referred to as the *grammar* stage. It primarily describes children in kindergarten through 3rd or 4th grade who *absorb* information. It is not so much a time of self-discovery as it is the accumulation of new ideas, new words, new stories, and new facts. All this is found in *The Mystery of History*, Volume III with 84 history lessons and hundreds of hands-on activities to activate the imagination and stimulate the senses.

Stage 2 is referred to as the *logic* stage because children of this age group are beginning to process information they've obtained and to *question* it. This group includes 4th grade through about 8th grade. Students begin to ask more *why* questions at this stage because their ability to think abstractly has developed further and they begin to process things more logically. *The Mystery of History* easily meets this criterion by offering history lessons *plus* hands-on learning, critical thinking exercises, timeline work, quizzes, and much more.

Stage 3 of the trivium of learning is referred to as the *rhetoric* stage. These are students from about 9th grade and up. By this stage, students should *apply* information that has been learned and assimilate that knowledge into a belief system. Beyond the history lessons in *The Mystery of History*, Older Student activities challenge students in the areas of research, apologetics, Bible study, literary analysis, discussion, and much more.

One last aspect of classical education is the process of repeating some material at each level of the trivium so that students grasp it with an increasing depth of understanding. In other words, a good classical education provides information to a student in the younger years, repeats it on a higher level

in the middle years, and repeats it again at an even higher level of learning in the older years. Not all curricula fit that mold, but *The Mystery of History* does. Please see the “Scope and Sequence” section for ways to repeat *The Mystery of History* through the years and derive the most from it.

The Charlotte Mason Method

Charlotte Mason was a practical and delightful British educator of the late 1800s and early 1900s whose common-sense principles have remained popular worldwide and have been warmly embraced by home educators. In all education, Charlotte Mason encouraged the use of living books, hands-on learning, short lessons, narrations, and a humanities-based approach to learning.

For history, Charlotte Mason encouraged a chronological approach, well-illustrated living books, additional literature, experiential learning, timeline work, and narration exercises—all of which are a natural part of *The Mystery of History*! If the Charlotte Mason approach to education inspires you, *The Mystery of History* will suit you well.

Bloom’s Taxonomy

Benjamin Bloom was an educational psychologist in the 1950s who helped educators identify six different classifications of learning in Bloom’s Taxonomy. They range from lower-level learning to higher-level learning in this order: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Bloom concluded that 95 percent of all test questions in the average classroom required students to think only at the lowest level of learning—recalling information. He observed that higher thinking skills were not being required of students.

I’ve kept Bloom’s theories in consideration when writing my curriculum, but I don’t feel I solved the problem through my tests. You will notice that they, too, are primarily focused on recalling information. That was intentional. I want the students to review over and over again the many characters they have studied.

However, in an attempt to require higher-level thinking, I designed the enrichment activities for each lesson to challenge students’ minds to apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information. The broad choice of activities should appeal to a wide range of learning styles and keep students interested.

Final Reflection

I don’t want to close this section without encouraging you above all else to follow the Lord’s model of education! He instructed the Israelites to teach His words this way:

You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deut. 6:7–9)

In His earthly ministry, Jesus taught by way of example, telling parables and stories, asking questions, and using object lessons. I believe the Lord Jesus Christ stands as our greatest model of a teacher, and I pray you seek Him as your ultimate guide in educating your students.