



SACRED HEART ACADEMY

Forming the Moral Imagination with Good Stories

I. Our Priorities at SHA

- A. Classroom Books - Cheapest investment in culture you can make. Literature aligned with history.
- B. Library Revival - Remove hundreds (thousands?) of mediocre, distracting books.
- C. Recitation - Every class is always memorizing poetry. Students memorize nearly 100 poems K-12.
- D. “Classics” Time - Daily opportunity for the teacher (or guest reader!) to read good books beyond the average student’s reading level which do not necessarily align with their history curriculum.
- E. Pedagogy
 1. Everyone “on the same page”: In every grade, with few exceptions, all books are read by all students at the same time and discussed daily. Staff read a book or two together each year.
 2. In addition to recitations, students read long poems as part of their literature curriculum, as well as casually for enrichment. (Focal point of our last internal PD day.)

II. What Makes a Discerning Librarian (or any other chooser of books)

- A. Strength of Character - The librarian should feel empowered as a formator whose choices matter.
- B. Respect for Students (and parents) - Book choices should respect students’ abilities, weaknesses, and innocence while serving parents as the primary educators.
- C. Thrift - Simplicity is central. Most libraries are discarding good books. Our librarian holds used book sales which put good books in the hands of kids while raising money for new acquisitions.

III. Resources

A. Philosophy

1. Vigen Guroian, [*Tending the Heart of Virtue*](#)
2. Michael O’Brien, [*A Landscape with Dragons*](#)
3. Laura Berquist, [*Designing Your Own Classical Curriculum*](#)
4. Russel Kirk, [“The Moral Imagination”](#) and [“Virtue: Can it be taught?”](#)

B. How-To

1. William Kirkpatrick, [*Books that Build Character*](#)
2. Sarah Mackenzie, [*The Read-Aloud Family*](#)
3. Essays from various Charlotte Mason proponents on “Living Books”
4. The CiRCE Institute [on mimetic instruction](#)

C. Book Lists

1. Gladys Hunt, [*Honey for a Child’s Heart*](#)
2. Maria Skrobola, [*Books that Form the Mind, Heart, and Soul*](#)
3. John Senior’s [“Thousand Good Books”](#)
4. Cardinal Newman Society’s [“Guide for the Catholic Reader”](#)
5. Word on Fire’s [“Great Books for Catholic Kids”](#)

Literature at Sacred Heart Academy

Reading List Highlights by Grade

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| Montessori/Kindergarten - Read-alouds and recitations focused on Mother Goose and Fairy Tales. | | |
| First Grade Illustrated fairy tales from Galdone, Jeffers, Brett, Pinkney, and others Stevenson, <i>A Child's Garden of Verses</i> Lobel, All <i>Frog and Toad</i> books Minarik, All <i>Little Bear</i> stories Demi, Stories of heroes and saints Flack, <i>The Story about Ping</i> | Fifth Grade Henty, <i>The Cat of Bubastes</i> Green, <i>Tales of the Greek Heroes</i> Colum, <i>The Children's Homer</i> Frenkel, <i>Aeneas</i> Winterfield, <i>Detectives in Togas</i> Lewis, <i>The Silver Chair, Dawntrader</i> Graham, <i>The Wind in the Willows</i> | Ninth Grade Mythology Homer, <i>The Odyssey</i> Sophocles, <i>Antigone, Oedipus Rex</i> Plato, <i>The Last Days of Socrates</i> Lewis, <i>Till We Have Faces</i> Virgil, <i>The Aeneid</i> Shakespeare, <i>Julius Caesar</i> |
| Second Grade Potter, <i>Peter Rabbit, Squirrel Nutkin, Mrs. Tigglywinkle</i> , and more Andersen, Several longer fairy tales Milne, <i>Winne-the-Pooh</i> Wilder, <i>Little House on the Prairie</i> Lofting, <i>The Story of Doctor Dolittle</i> Williams, <i>The Velveteen Rabbit</i> | Sixth Grade Colum, <i>Children of Odin</i> French, <i>Rolf and the Viking Bow</i> Windeatt, <i>Benedict: Hero of the Hills</i> Greek, <i>King Arthur and His Knights</i> Pyle, <i>Otto of the Silver Hand</i> Lowmsberry, <i>Boy Knight of Reims</i> Tolkien, <i>The Hobbit</i> | Tenth Grade Waugh, <i>Helena</i> Augustine, <i>Confessions</i> Boethius, <i>Consolation of Philosophy</i> Chesterton, <i>Ballad of the White Horse</i> Tennyson, <i>Idylls of the King</i> Dante, <i>Inferno</i> Shakspeare, <i>Henry V</i> |
| Third Grade Wilder, <i>Farmer Boy</i> Spyri, <i>Heidi</i> Lewis, <i>The Horse and His Boy</i> Lang, <i>Blue Fairy Book</i> D'Aulaire, biographies of famous Americans Foster, <i>George Washington's World</i> | Seventh Grade Macdonald, <i>Princess and the Goblin</i> Stevenson, <i>Treasure Island</i> Kelly, <i>The Trumpeter of Krakow</i> Longfellow, <i>Song of Hiawatha</i> Twain, <i>Tom Sawyer</i> Montgomery, <i>Anne of Green Gables</i> Kipling, <i>The Jungle Book</i> | Eleventh Grade Twain, <i>Joan of Arc</i> Chaucer, <i>Canterbury Tales</i> Shakespeare, <i>Merchant of Venice</i> Shakespeare, <i>Hamlet</i> Waugh, <i>Edmund Campion</i> Dickens, <i>Tales of Two Cities</i> Bronte, <i>Jane Eyre</i> |
| Fourth Grade Green, <i>Robin Hood</i> Collodi, <i>Pinocchio</i> Sewall, <i>Black Beauty</i> Yates, <i>Amos Fortune</i> Numerous saints lives from the Vision Books series Lawson, <i>Mr. Revere and I</i> | Eighth Grade Shakespeare, <i>Twelfth Night</i> Dickens, <i>A Christmas Carol</i> Longfellow, <i>Evangeline</i> Latham, <i>Carry On, Mr. Bowditch</i> Moody, <i>Little Bitches</i> Alcott, <i>Little Women</i> Lansing, <i>Endurance</i> | Twelfth Grade Hawthorne, <i>The Scarlet Letter</i> Thoreau, <i>Walden</i> Twain, <i>Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i> Douglass, <i>The Narrative Life</i> Cather, <i>Death Comes for the Archbishop</i> O'Connor, <i>A Good Man is Hard to Find</i> Berry, <i>That Distant Land</i> |

Recommended Collections of Poetry

| Preschool-5th | 5th-12th |
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| <i>The Random House Book of Poetry</i> , chosen by Arnold Lobel <i>Sing a Song of Seasons</i> , chosen by Fiona Waters <i>The Barefoot Book of Classical Poems</i> , chosen by Jackie Morris <i>The Harp and the Laurel Wreath</i> , chosen by Laura Berquist <i>Poems to Learn by Heart</i> , chosen by Caroline Kennedy | <i>Favorite Poems Old and New</i> , chosen by Helen Ferris <i>101 Great American Poems</i> , chosen by American Poetry Project <i>Best Loved Poems of the American People</i> , chosen by Hazel Felleman <i>Six Centuries of Great Poetry</i> , chosen by Robert Penn Warren <i>Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry</i> , Perrine and Arp |



Classrooms that Form the Moral Imagination

Beautiful Environments Matter

- Often classrooms feel either cold and industrial or overly busy and distracting. Our goal should be a room with the warmth and simplicity of a beautiful home. The Montessori method is a great model of this.
- Every aspect of your room and your person is instructive. Creating space and time that is purposeful, beautiful, and uncluttered forms minds that are the same.
- Prefer the natural to the artificial: glass, wood, and metal over plastic. Real rather than fake plants. A few good books on a wooden shelf. Songs and poems that their parents and grandparents learned.
- Even if you have great custodial support, children should have daily chores. Their parents will thank you.
- Order begins externally and is internalized. Your classroom should reinforce the lesson: When students become distracted, is there something beautiful for them to look at?

Story and Rhyme Suffuse the Curriculum

- Reading Aloud - Every student should read good books aloud every day. There's no room for "fluff" in the short time they have to read, hear, and memorize beautiful things. Choose what is time-tested.
- Recitations - Students should always be memorizing good poetry and songs. Recitations exercise the voice and memory, teach posture, pronunciation, and rhythm, and increase a child's vocabulary and confidence. Ongoing recitations are a great way to use little snippets of time that might otherwise be lost and foster class unity and culture. Start with Mother Goose, then Robert Louis Stevenson, then great British and American poets (Tennyson, Longfellow, Dickinson, Frost etc.).
- Literature - All books should be read together and discussed together. In addition to transmitting a culture and forming imaginations, you are teaching the essential skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. You must be *literally* on the same page with your class. Differentiation comes with the depth of comprehension each student is capable of and in prepared weekly read aloud passages drawn from material suited to the student's reading level. If students are permitted to choose their book and follow their interests, let it be in science and history.
- Classics - A daily half hour dedicated to the teacher reading aloud a good book with a message the children need, but which would be a challenging independent read. Students may have copies in which to read along.
- Library Cart - If your school library is not conducive to students' development, consider a classroom library or a library cart to direct what they are reading outside of school hours.

Virtue is a Cultural Touchstone

- The entire staff should think and talk about virtue and imagination. Bring parents into the conversation.
- Virtues and vices are habits. They need to be reinforced and practiced.
- The cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude) are not the avoidance of evil, but the positive powers that make us capable of being what we ought to be.

Discernment of Children's Literature

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How to Remove 1,000+ Mediocre Books from Your School Library

- I. Principles
 - A. Discerning bad from good and good from great children's literature is a necessary part of forming the imagination and preserving the innocence of children.
 - B. It is just as false to excuse bad literature by saying "At least they're reading!" as it is to say of junk food consumption "At least they're eating!" or of vandalism "At least they're playing outside!"
 - C. As with any other aspect of formation, we must continue to form ourselves and develop our own discernment as we form those entrusted to our care.
 - D. Discernment is a prudential ability developed incrementally over time. We start with the most clear, black-and-white cases and slowly develop finer perception.
 - E. Tens of thousands of children's books are published each year. Most are illustrated digitally and written formulaically. Soon they will be created by AI. Few will survive to a second printing. Because of this volume, we **MUST** judge books by their covers. The ephemerality of new books makes it fitting to have a universal preference for those which have stood the test of time.
- II. Answering Objections
 - A. Winnowing away the chaff in your library isn't censorship: You aren't eliminating unorthodox books, non-Christian books, or books by specific authors you just don't like. On the contrary, you are eliminating ugly books, poorly written books, and stupid books that waste our children's time.
 - B. If a student read a book per week for his entire 12-year career at a school, he would read **432 books**. If he read a book per day he would read **2160 books**. We are in **no danger** of running out of books for students to read. We *are* in danger of students getting discouraged by the number of books to choose from and the frequency of uninteresting books that offend their good taste.
- III. Immediate Steps
 - A. Stop all deliveries from Scholastic. Find a better company to use for book fairs or, better yet, find a discerning librarian who will find excellent children's books at library book sales and will sell spare copies to children with proceeds to benefit the library.
 - B. Remove the most objectionable books first. Leave borderline cases alone for the first year or two.
 - C. Acquire a couple hundred good books from library book sales, used book stores, home libraries, etc.
 - D. If you can't sort through the stacks, at least don't allow bad books **BACK** onto the shelves: Advise your librarian or your staff not to allow mediocre books to return to circulation.
 - E. Improving literature curriculum with sets of good books is the cheapest curriculum investment you can make.
- IV. How to Pick a Book:
 - A. "No book is really worth reading at the age of ten which is not equally—and often far more—worth reading at the age of fifty and beyond." - C.S. Lewis
 - B. If you wouldn't read it on your own, don't make them read it. **Corollary: If you want to give a children's picture book to a family, sit down in the store and read it five times in a row. If you don't still like it, put it back on the shelf.**
 - C. Prefer the beautiful, the time-tested, even the simply chronologically old. Choose books you are most confident about and leave the ambiguous and ambivalent for later.
 - D. Avoid moralism (unless it is partially facetious as in Belloc's *Cautionary Tales for Children*), ambiguous or warped traditional symbols (as in *How to Train Your Dragon* or *The Wizard of Oz*), cartoonish or ugly illustrations, "issue" books (à la *Berenstain Bears*), interminable series (even good ones no longer by the original authors), Disney-fied fairy tales, and generally anything you'd be embarrassed to have your pastor drop by and read aloud (*Captain Underpants*, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*) or which you yourself wouldn't be eager to reread.



Teaching Nursery Rhymes and Fairy Tales

- Read the entire story through without comment. Do not attempt to explain the story or address questions that children haven't raised themselves. Beauty speaks for itself.
- The first time you read a story, choose a text without illustrations. Later, try illustrated versions and seek reactions ("Is this how you imagined...?"). **Even better:** *Tell* stories rather than reading them.
- Don't be afraid to read the same story or rhyme repeatedly: Desire for a particular story shows that it strikes a nerve or meets a need for that child. *Non multa, sed multum* – not many, but much.
- Try different tellings of fairy tales, but avoid those that diminish violence or gloss over traumatic moments. Discuss which lyrics to a particular rhyme are the best or the most true.
- Young children should be naturally asking questions and making assertions about the goodness of a character's actions or the truth of what they say. Don't be afraid to say that fairy tales are true stories.
- Fight tooth and nail against Disney-fication. The pop culture versions of these stories are shallow at best, perverted at worst, and in both cases frequently robbed of their essential power.

Recommended Resources:

- **Illustrated Mother Goose Collections**
 - [Blanche Fisher Wright, *The Real Mother Goose*](#)
 - [The Arnold Lobel Book of Mother Goose](#)
 - [Tomie dePaola's Mother Goose](#)
 - [Tasha Tudor, *Mother Goose*](#)
 - [Mother Goose: The Original Volland Edition](#)
 - **Fairy Tale Collections**
 - [Grimm's Fairy Tales](#), The Brothers Grimm
 - [The Blue Fairy Book](#), Andrew Lang (and other colored fairy books)
 - [Perrault's Fairy Tales](#), Charles Perrault
 - [Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales](#)
 - [The Happy Prince and Other Stories](#), Oscar Wilde
 - [One Thousand and One Nights](#)
 - **Secondary Texts/Resources:**
 - "The Ethics of Elfland" from *Orthodoxy* and ["Education by Fairy Tales,"](#) G.K. Chesterton
 - "On Fairy Stories," J.R.R. Tolkien
 - ["Three Ways of Writing for Children,"](#) C.S. Lewis
 - [Tending the Heart of Virtue](#), Vigen Guroian
 - [A Reader on the Moral Imagination](#), Russell Kirk
 - [The Uses of Enchantment](#), Bruno Bettelheim
 - **Fantasy for Adults Beyond Lewis and Tolkien**
 - Lloyd Alexander, *The Prydain Chronicles*
 - Peter S. Beagle, *The Last Unicorn*
 - Michael Ende, *The Neverending Story*
 - George MacDonald, *The Princess and the Goblin*, *Phantastes*, *At the Back of the North Wind*
 - Walter Wangerin Jr., *The Book of the Dun Cow*
 - Marly Youmans, *Glimmerglass*, *Seren of the Wildwood*, and *Thaliad*
- Every child should know dozens of Mother Goose rhymes before learning to read.
- For a variety of rhymes, Lobel's and dePaola's books are best. All of these collections have good illustrations, but I personally like dePaola's the least.

Recommended Stories by Subject/Theme (All from *Grimm's* unless specified)

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| <p>I. Rule of Three</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. "Three Little Pigs" B. "Goldilocks" C. "The Three Feathers" <p>II. Initiation/maturation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. "Little Red Riding Hood" B. "Iron Hans" C. "The Three Languages" D. "Puss-in-Boots" (Perrault) E. "The Goose Girl" F. "Snow White" G. "Sleeping Beauty" ("Sun, Moon, and Talia," Basile OR "Briar Rose") H. "Cinderella" (Grimm over Perrault) I. "Jack the Giant Slayer"/"Jack and the Beanstalk" (Lang) J. "Rapunzel" <p>III. Integration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. "The Queen Bee" B. "The Two Brothers" C. "Sindbad the Seaman and Sindbad the Porter" (<i>One Thousand and One Nights</i>) D. "The Fisherman and the Jinny" (<i>One Thousand and One Nights</i>) <p>IV. On Anger</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. "Hans, My Hedgehog" B. "The Seven Ravens" C. "The Spirit in the Bottle" D. "The Story of the Three Sheiks" (<i>One Thousand and One Nights</i>) | <p>V. Overcoming Great Odds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. "The Valiant Little Tailor" ("The Clever Little Tailor", "Seven at One Blow") B. "Brother and Sister" C. "Hansel and Gretel" <p>VI. Learning to Love/The Animal Groom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. "The Raven" B. "The Two King's Children" C. "The Drummer" D. "The Fairy Tale of the One Who Went Forth to Learn Fear" E. "The Frog Prince" F. "Snow-White and Rose-Red" G. "East of Sun and West of Moon" (Lang) H. "Cupid and Psyche" (Hamilton) I. "The Enchanted Pig" J. "Beauty and the Beast" (Perrault) <p>VII. The Forbidden Room</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. "Bluebeard" (Perrault - Not for students.) B. "Fitcher's Bird" C. "Mr. Fox" (Joseph Jacobs' <i>English Fairy Tales</i>) D. "Our Lady's Child" <p>VIII. Providence and Riches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. "The Old Man Made Young Again" B. "Hans in Luck" C. "The Poor Man and the Rich Man" D. "The Golden Goose" |
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"I think the so-called fairy story one of the highest forms of literature, and quite erroneously associated with children (as such)."

- J.R.R. Tolkien



Stories that Showcase the Virtues OR Their Opposing Vices

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| Prudence | Russell Hoban, <i>Best Friends for Frances</i> Paul Galdone, <i>Henny Penny</i> and <i>Town Mouse</i> , <i>Country Mouse</i> Beatrix Potter, <i>The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin</i> and <i>The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck</i> Hans Christian Andersen, “The Emperor’s New Clothes” Carlo Collodi, <i>Pinocchio</i> The Story of Joseph and the Famine in Egypt (Genesis 41-45) |
| Justice | Russell Hoban, <i>The Little Brute Family</i> Marjorie Flack, <i>The Story about Ping</i> The Brothers Grimm, “The Frog Prince” Roger Lancelyn Green, <i>The Adventures of Robin Hood</i> Nathaniel Hawthorne, “The Miraculous Pitcher” |
| Temperance | Arnold Lobel, “Cookies” (From <i>Frog and Toad Together</i>) Paul Galdone, <i>The Little Red Hen</i> Laura Ingalls Wilder, <i>Farmer Boy</i> |
| Fortitude | Livy, “The Story of Mucius Scaevola” or “Horatius at the Bridge” Laura Ingalls Wilder, <i>Little House on the Prairie</i> and <i>Little House in the Big Woods</i> The Brothers Grimm, “Iron John” (sometimes called “Iron Hans”) The Story of David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17) |
| Faith | Charles Perrault, “Puss in Boots” “Midas and the Golden Touch” The Brothers Grimm, “The Golden Feather” George MacDonald, <i>The Princess and the Goblin</i> |
| Hope | Marcia Brown, <i>Dick Whittington and His Cat</i> The Brothers Grimm, “The Elves and the Shoemaker” or “Cinderella” The Story of Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17) |
| Love | Margery Williams, <i>The Velveteen Rabbit</i> Hans Christian Andersen, “The Little Mermaid” and “The Snow Queen” Oscar Wilde, “The Happy Prince” and “The Selfish Giant” Charles Perrault, “Beauty and the Beast” |

“When I was ten, I read fairy tales in secret and would have been ashamed if I had been found doing so. Now that I am fifty, I read them openly. When I became a man I put away childish things, including the fear of childishness and the desire to be very grown up.”

- C.S. Lewis