

HEART MATTERS

NON SCHOLÆ SED VITÆ

Libraries of Hope Newsletter

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Announcements.....1

WEH Group
Recommendations.....2

Marlene’s Musings.....2

WEH in Action.....3

MOI Minute.....7

Krystal-Splaining.....7

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Month 10 new books are in the [store](#).

MASB: American Progress Part 1. Here are stories of America’s great writers, thinkers, humanitarians, poets, inventors, etc. that moved us forward in remarkable ways.

World Freedom: The History of Germany. Another contribution by Henriette Marshall.

Little Cousins: We will visit Austria, Romania, and Hungary.

Sunshine Series: Keeper of the Bees by Gene Stratton-Porter. This is the last book she wrote. “The tale of a wounded World War I veteran, a beekeeper and an impish tomboy all helped by each other. A book that examines the healing power that nature and kindness can have upon someone’s life.”



The Keeper of the Bees



Our Little Austrian, Hungarian, and Romanian Cousins



A History of Germany



MY AMERICA STORY BOOK



Art credit: Crashed Aeroplane by John Singer Sargent

WEH GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

--How Drawing Helps you to See More Clearly (https://www.brainpickings.org/2015/07/10/john-ruskin-drawing/?fbclid=IwAR2Jz_ghA-L0AMVu3aKz7WLkvSD-cZmq3QTSPQV0UUfnpug4tvap-muus208iI)

--Why Beautiful Things Make Us Happy (<https://youtu.be/-O5kN-PIUV7w>)

MARLENE'S MUSINGS

--**I was reading** about the Wright brothers this morning, and gleaned a couple of lessons for us:

1. "Having made up their minds, they proceeded not to build, but to study."

I hope you are taking time to nourish your own heart and to study before you try and create a learning plan for your children. I always recommend that you not make drastic, sudden changes but rather, keep doing what is working for you and gradually add in things you are learning from your study, and begin to remove those things that no longer make sense. "You cannot speed grow a garden."

2. "Hours were spent collecting data, thrashing out in arguments every material possibility. Wilbur would take one point of view and Orville the other, and the argument would wax bitter until one could prove his point conclusively to the other. This was the best possible method to adopt."

I see one of today's greatest danger is that of silencing opposing voices. If we could but learn to be civilized in our discourse, we could learn so much from contrasting points of view.

3. Re: the historic flight at Kitty Hawk:

"...so little importance did they attach to the occasion, that only five persons turned up to watch history being made." It would be several more years before the world would notice what had happened on that historic day. By small and simple means in your homes, great things will be accomplished, even though the people around you may not notice. The Wright Brothers didn't care what the world thought. They were focused on their task. "Time and time again they were to find that the changes and improvements they had made were not sufficient. Yet they did not despair. Once started, they believed in the ultimate success of their labor, and nothing was allowed to stand in their way."

Trust the process and success will be yours.

--**I've been enjoying** a houseful of little people for the last couple of weeks, and it's been lively around here! I have loved every minute.

But it also reminds me of the demands placed on you as a mother. Please understand the ideas I share through WEH are designed for busy mothers. Small and simple. Spontaneous and flexible with just enough rhythm to

(Marlene's Musings cont.) keep your sanity. Learning through everyday life.

It's so important to allow children their childhoods -- there will be plenty of time for the academics when they are more developmentally prepared. Build relationships first.

Enjoy the journey. They really do grow up so fast!

--I hope you are catching the spirit of the rotation schedule. Although you can somewhat plan and select books and stories, there

is so much room for spontaneity and surprises. There is no need to say this week or this month we will focus only on India, for example, and reject everything else. Children love variety. The more impressions you plant, the more connections can be made down the road.

Heart learning is not the same as mind learning. Think of what the phrase 'learning by heart' means -- it means remembering something. The impressions from stories, music, poetry and pictures are long-lasting and will be used to form connections all along the way. And it's those connections that produce the dopamine!



Art credit: Mud Pies by Ludwig Knaus

WEH IN ACTION

--Just had an awesome experience! We are reading a book about Abraham Lincoln right now and it shares the details of some stories that are in a poem we learned a year or two ago. It's called *Abraham Lincoln* and it's in the *Favorite Family Poems of the House of Jacob* PDF. I got excited and we recited the poem again together. I still knew all the actions we made up and just needed a quick refresher on the words. It brought back sweet memories of little kids excitedly reciting it and pumping their fists in the air on the part, "Abraham Lincoln did it!" And shaking their finger on "such courage never fails." See, back then, it was just a fun poem to say, but now that they are older and are revisiting him, they recognize the powerful story and example that the poem depicts and now it carries more meaning. We found connections to our previous learning and it was so organic. Loved it!

Also, random...I was thinking about how when I was young I had the desire to play the piano and so I took lessons. But eventually the novelty wore off and I didn't practice much. I realize that I didn't have a love of music in my heart. I had no song I wanted to get good enough to be able to play. I had no composer's work playing in my heart. Plunking out simple notes and technique bookwork were dry. I see now that if I had listened to piano music and fallen in love with it, I probably would have cared more.

--(From Marlene about a posted question): I know there are a lot of Charlotte Mason fans in this group. I love her, too! The question has been posed why I don't talk much about narration. While narration has a place, I believe it can be carried too far. One of the objectives of our learning here is how to reach the deepest places of our children's

hearts. There are things we learn and experience that are too deep for words. Can you articulate why a piece of music moves you? Or a piece of art? And while you can certainly narrate back a story line, can you truly articulate how a story is making you feel?

When you read something and immediately require your child to tell it back to you, you are keeping the impressions at a more surface level where words can be used. There can certainly be a place for that, but when you make that the routine of learning, I believe you can actually begin to work against what we are trying to do here.

(Answer to Marlene's post): There's much more to narration than sentimentality, though. It trains the children in good habits. The best thing I've done for my children's academic and life success was to

(*WEH in Action cont.*) train them in the habit of attention, and narration was the key to that. It replaces writing and rhetoric assignments until they are truly ready for it.

The most important part of narration, in my opinion, is that it makes them stop! and truly listen to what the author is trying to say before inserting their own opinions and sentimentalism into the text. It cultivates humble and thoughtful learners. We have a huge problem in our culture of arrogant young adults who think they know better than those who came before them. Narration nips that in the bud.

I love the work that you do here, but I'm sorry to say I think this post really missed the reason for narration. I urge parents to not dismiss it so quickly. I went to a conference once and they had a panel of Charlotte Mason graduates, they unanimously agreed narration was the most important element of their education, that prepared them well for life and turned them into deep thinkers. Yes, it is not always fun, because it's hard work, but it pays off.

(Another answer to Marlene's post):

Oh!! This post touches my heart on several levels. First of all, we just moved to NJ this winter. Today I took my children to the Metropolitan Museum of Art for the first time. Wow. I saw this original painting **IN PERSON** today! I was so drawn in by it because of the feelings it evoked, especially of reading "Jungle Book" aloud to my children earlier this year. And, I thought as I stood there in the gallery, "this painting, the wonder in their faces, the physical closeness between them and the soft, vibrant colors, it just captures so much about what the Well Educated Heart is helping me to experience with my children." Then to come home and see this post tonight, I was very moved, both for that reason and also regarding narration, because I know of what Marlene speaks. For several months now I have been struggling to find a way to articulate it and I'm grateful that she did! By way of background, I have been deeply committed to a Charlotte Mason education for a number of years. Early in our education journey we found a fan-

tastic international community of CM schools and homeschools to be mentored and strengthened by. Learning the 'art of narration' with my children both orally and in writing has brought us a lot of growth and joy. Like others shared, I loved how it helped both me and my children learn to pay attention, to meet the mind of the author/artist/creator and approach their works more humbly before inserting our own ideas. That skill has actually helped me so much in my human relationships, too.



Art Credit: Jungle Tales by James Jebusa Shannon

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But like Marlene said, "there are things we learn and experience that are too deep for words." I have definitely come to realize that it can be taken too far. It can get to the point of training their minds to attend well but not their hearts. Narration is a great tool for training the mind to attend. It's not that hard. But how do you teach the heart to attend? That is the question I am constantly asking myself now. I think it involves slowing down. Listening without responding for a time. Modeling more, instructing less. Being curious. Acting it out. Learning to express feelings honestly. Both heart and mind are so important, and overuse of one or other other can cause deficiencies -- that's where a mother's discernment comes in -- what tools to use when. I have felt the effects of narration overuse in my children (and myself), where the heart kind of takes a back seat because the brain is so used to being the driver. Gratefully for us it's not too late to make a few course corrections and find a better balance between heart and mind work. Day by day, I am weaning myself of engrained systems that are very comfortable for the mind, and

(*WEH in Action cont.*) learning to trust my heart more. To make a long story short, after suffering a serious accident including a brain injury almost two years ago, I was unable to homeschool for a year and a half. Seeking for some continuity in my children's education, I found an amazing CM school for them to attend while I recovered. It had a lovely atmosphere and excelled in everything they were doing, but over time I could feel something vital was missing in my children, even with me still being quite involved. My children were performing well, but I was surprised and saddened to see a lack of desire to relate all of the amazing works of literature, art, poetry and nature to their own lives (especially in my older children). Looking back, I think I can see that they became so tired of being overly challenged at a mind level while engaging with the great works that they didn't have time or interest for it on their own time anymore -- it was really missing the point!

But gratefully, in February a tender mercy took place -- we had a very special opportunity to move back east to live in my grandparents' home, and I am now back to teaching my children again -- so happy! At first I was really nervous, still recovering from a brain injury. I find that I struggle more with narration now. But I knew I was supposed to bring them home again, so I asked a lot of soul searching questions about what approach to take. Interestingly, I was introduced to WEH a year ago by special friends in Idaho and felt strongly that I needed to look closely into it. The more I did, the more I realized exactly what had been missing with our CM education -- giving ample space and unstructured time to let the seeds of truth, goodness, and beauty germinate in their hearts by having more choice in what they read and how they respond to it.

For example, in starting My America Story Book, which we love, it has been really interesting to see my children's reactions. My oldest, a 14-year-old, almost always goes straight for written narrations. They are beautifully written, but I'm trying to gently teach her that there is more...to try to dig a little deeper, try mixing it up and instead of narrating, to just capture questions it stirs up in her, things she is curious about, feelings she had. My other children seem to be able to do this more easily, which I find interesting. Maybe there is an age or level by which narration starts to do more harm than good? I do still believe there is a place for narration as a foundational skill, we still use it often, but the purpose feels different, especially in my older children. Sometimes when we are stuck, or minds are wandering while we listen, narration can help us get back on track so that we can remind our hearts to dig for gems. "Follow your heart, but take your brain with you!"

(One more answer to Marlene's post):

One thing I love about the way Charlotte Mason recommended we use narration is that she did NOT recommend asking "quiz" or leading type questions, looking to see if students remember certain info that we, the parent/teacher, deem important from a book. She saw what the students were hearing or reading as a "feast," where each may take what nourishes him or her best at that reading, (We don't force everyone to eat the same amount of the same dishes at a feast! They may take what they like.) and that is what is heard in the narration: what mattered to that narrator that time, and nothing more is to be asked for. And soft eyes and smiles all around. Not a severe "you will now tell me all that I have just read word for word. GO!" with a frown on our face. This was so revolutionary to me! It's so beautiful, instead of the idea that there is a set list of facts and skills every single person must have to be "educated," and as their parents we have to make sure they get it "all" in. We spread the feast, teach good habits like attention and others, and the students (and ourselves) will be filled with what we need, each being sparked by different loves and aptitudes.

I think narration (oral first, which CM didn't recommended asking for before age 6, and later on written (maybe age 10-ish, starting with just once a week or so and building over the years) is a fantastic and gentle tool for gradually developing skills to express one's feelings and thoughts in words and later writing, composition. So simple and elegant instead of all the complicated Writing Programs out there! Marlene, I've always seen the Notebooking recommendations as the narration part of WEH, and not seen a conflict with CM-style narration. Oral narration helps make Notebooking more natural and fun, in my experience. I see what you mean that it can be taken too far and applied severely to every single thing we read/study/see/listen to out of wanting to "do it right," though. Definitely a possible pitfall. My understanding has been that there are plenty of times that a CM-style family would do a read aloud just for enjoyment, walk in nature just for the glory of it, listen to a piece of music just for the experience (most of the time), etc. all without any type of required narration. And narrations can also be acted out, drawn, or whatever other creative thing you can think to keep the family learning alive and reaching hearts.

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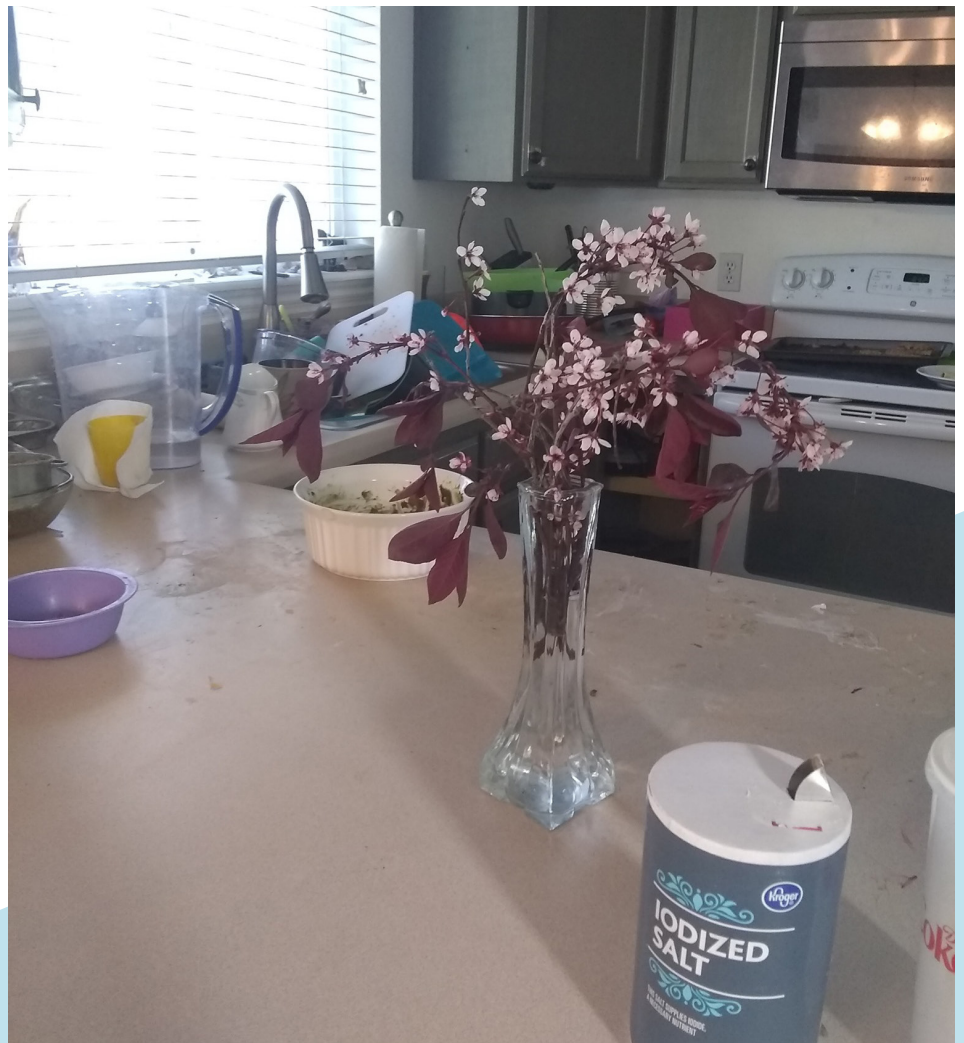
(WEH in Action cont.) In fact, I remember reading CM cautioning teachers several times not to ruin things by being what we would think of as overly “schooly,” lol. Someone could be more or less structured with it as fit them and their family. More strict or more loose. As I have worked on my own narration skills with my kids, I feel my heart growing along with my mind as I learn to slow down and really enjoy and pay close attention to books. Not always perfect, of course, but that feels like the general trend. I first heard about narration (not from any Charlotte Mason-ish source) as more of a quizzing activity to MAKE SURE they got the important stuff, lol -- I let it be “dead,” asked leading questions, was more looking if they remembered certain info, demanding (as much as I can being a pretty easy-going person naturally, haha), not having it be an activity we enter into with an open heart for our child (KEY). That didn’t last long and I’m SO glad I found Charlotte Mason when I did and started reading her volumes. I don’t want anyone here to get the impression that those don’t have anything to offer someone who loves WEH. They so do!!

So, I think I agree with you, Marlene, about the possible negatives of certain ways of using “narration,” but I also wanted to share how I see it from my study of Charlotte Mason, though I am admittedly not a pro yet. And, I have seen WEH and CM as very complimentary, with WEH maybe working better for someone who wanted a bit more relaxed atmosphere, giving the kids more freedom to choose their books and topics, and CM for someone who loved the heart centered approach but wanted a bit more structure, although you could use the WEH Rotation and more exact CM methods for sure, and lots of CM principles are part of WEH already, and CM can be implemented in a more relaxed way too. ... I guess what I’m saying is that I sort of see WEH and CM as two branches on the same tree with a lot of overlap, and narration to me I saw in both. (Oral and written narrations and keeping of notebooks later on in CM, and notebooking in WEH). And I know there is variety in how people implement both methods, of course. I will think about what you said about making it “the routine of learning,” I know there are times when things feel more alive around here and times when they don’t, and it’s probably when we’ve drifted into imbalance between mind and heart, one way or the other. A quote from CM on that: “The question is not, -- how much does the youth know? when he has finished his education -- but how much does he care? and about how many orders of things does he care? In fact, how large is the room in which he finds his feet set? and, therefore, how full is the life he has before him?”

--Can you see them amid the mess? (see photo) Some days all you can do is add some flowers. Just a reminder to myself and anyone else who is feeling overwhelmed and out of energy today.

--This just hit me deeply. God created the seeds to grow and we don’t create them. He did. We must plant them and provide the environment for them...but the seed has full potential and all it needs to be exactly what God wants it to be. My child has that exact same potential and preparation in her/him. I don’t have to create them or fill them up...they are not empty but need me to prepare their soil.

--I opened up the app and was feeling a bit discontent and your podcast in the first 3 minutes made my heart happy. I don’t know how you do it..., but every time I listen I become a better mother.



MOI MINUTE



Art credit: Sisters by Elin Danielson-Gambogi

One of my favorite things to do with my MOI friends each month is to share bits of randomness with each other -- little things that have inspired us somehow during the month. Sometimes it's poetry, or someone gives the highlights from a book they're reading. Every once in a while, someone will show a piece of art that really spoke to them, or we'll toss around our favorite read alouds. One friend brought cookies for her share last week -- we've never had that one before but it was a hit! I love that it can be anything and it's so fun to see what we all come up with.

KRYSTAL-SPLAINING

I just want to throw in my two cents about the idea of "heart-warming" books. The Harry Potter conversation triggered this thought, but I've seen it come up again and again over the years.

One of the first stories I was introduced to when I started working for my mom was Hans Christian Andersen's Match Stick Girl. And my reaction was, "THIS is heart warming?!" If you don't know the story, it's about a poor girl on the streets trying to sell the last of her match sticks to survive. Spoiler alert: she doesn't. It was so depressing (even though she was comforted by her Angel grandmother as she passed)! So I asked my mom how on earth that's considered heart-warming. For my benefit, she changed the term to heart-stirring. But I think the reason she chose "heart-warming" is because she means warming not in the sense of "happy, uplifting, etc.," but in the sense of making warmer, from cold to hot. As in "our hearts are ice, we need to find a way to warm them up." We need to feel again. In our super fact- and data-driven world, our hearts have become cold and we don't feel as much. So the stories she shares is meant to warm us up. To help us feel again. (Find her podcast on the Snow Queen for a better explanation.)

But feeling again doesn't always mean feeling good and happy. I think back on stories I've read over the years, and there's a lot of hard things in them. New World explorers befriending the natives, then stealing from and killing them. War. Slavery. Murderous mobs to suppress free speech.

The point is this: Heart-warming doesn't necessarily mean happy and feel-good. It means it makes you feel. So is Harry Potter heart-warming? That's up to you. I read it in my late teens and through college. I loved it. Couldn't get enough of it. Parts of it were very dark and I probably wouldn't want really young kids reading it, but it made me feel alive while I read it. The constant conflict between good vs evil, good fighting against immeasurable odds, evil sometimes winning in spite of everything....it made me want to put in that kind of effort. It was inspiring. I wanted to be special like Harry Potter. But knew that even if I wasn't, everyone had their part to play. He couldn't have done it alone. So for me, yes, Harry Potter is heart-warming.

But that won't be the case for everyone. Marlene, herself, keeps trying to get herself to read them to see what all the hullabaloo is about, but as far as I know, she still hasn't. She has too many other good books she's reading! Some people find the writing too simple and formulaic, so it detracts too much from the story. Some people find the subject matter doesn't mesh with their personal beliefs. And all of that's fine. The greatest thing about this philosophy is you take what you want, and leave what you don't. Just decide for yourself.