Week 1: Why Implement the Charlotte Mason Style?

**Just who or what is Charlotte Mason?**

Charlotte Mason was a 19th century (1842-1923) British educator who believed education was “an atmosphere, a discipline, and a life.” She believed in teaching children in ways that encouraged curiosity and enthusiasm, while at the same time expecting excellence in many areas—even more areas than most curricula expect. Her philosophies are still fresh today, especially among homeschoolers who use them unfailingly to raise bright, resourceful children.

Although Charlotte Mason never had children of her own, she believed strongly that all children (not just the upper class) deserved a full and rich education. During the 10+ years she taught at the Davidson School in Worthington, England, she began to establish a vision of how this full and rich education for all social classes would look.

As her vision grew, she was asked to teach and give lectures in Chichester, England, at the Bishop Otter Teacher Training College. Soon after, she began giving lectures to parents to help them understand basic principles about raising children. From these lectures, *Home Education* was born and the Parent’s Educational Union began. (Think the first organized homeschool teacher’s group.)

In 1891, Charlotte Mason moved to Ambleside, England, and started the House of Education which trained governesses and others working with children in Charlotte Mason’s principles and methods. New books followed, which we now call Charlotte Mason’s Original Homeschool Series. Because her teaching methods and philosophy made so much sense, and made such a difference in a child’s education, more and more schools began adopting her style, which we now call the Charlotte Mason style.

**In this lesson, I’d like to focus on WHY our homeschool follows the Charlotte Mason style.**

I’ll get into the nitty-gritty of Charlotte Mason (CM) particulars over the course of this series, and how they build brilliant students. As an introduction, though, I want to share about the ooey-gooey, mushy feelings that make this method of homeschooling my primary style.

Through such things as reading living books with my children, teaching them handicrafts, and enjoying nature together, there’s a sort of “life is school” attitude that’s had me hooked from the beginning. Lessons are gentle, and many of them are conducive to sitting on the couch all snugged up.

I had been a public school teacher previously and saw so many precious children who could have thrived if their parents would have simply taken the time to love on them during lessons. (Homework, of course.) As much as I tried, as their classroom teacher, I couldn’t love on every single student every day—making school work and home work sterile and uninviting. I knew
from the moment I started homeschooling that a loving, encouraging, anything-but-sterile environment was what I wanted to create for my children.

After reading Susan Schaeffer Macaulay’s *For the Children’s Sake* when my oldest was five years old, I knew I had found the answer! **It was possible to “do school” with the sweetness that I had envisioned.** The author spelled it out for me in such a way that built my confidence enough to carry me through schooling with the CM style eleven years later!

Little did I know in the beginning how much *more* blessed our school would become using this approach. For example, one major added bonus to this “gentle style of learning” (and there are lots of bonuses) includes lessons that are short and sweet, which allows more time for the extras of life. Those extras include time for my kids to be kids, time to explore personal interests, time to take 4-H classes, and even time for running errands. Blessings indeed!

**Don’t be fooled, though!** All this gentle, loving, short and sweet talk doesn’t equal up to a less than superior education. On the contrary, I have been able to offer my children very challenging material, and lots of it. **It’s actually because of the simplicity and sweetness that we have more time to dive deep, tackle tough stuff, and take outside classes that we otherwise wouldn’t have the time to do!**

Okay, enough for this lesson. Snuggles, sweetness, time for kids to be kids, AND real learning…Have I convinced you how wonderful a CM education is yet? During the rest of the series, I’ll write about each of the key characteristics that make a Charlotte Mason education work!

Here’s what you have to look forward to:

- Week 2: Living Literature as Education
- Week 3: Short Lessons
- Week 4: Narration
- Week 5: Copywork and Dictation
- Week 6: Poetry and Shakespeare
Week 7: “Living” Math
Week 8: Artist Study
Week 9: Composer and Hymn Study
Week 10: Nature Study
Week 11: Handicrafts and Life Skills
Week 12: Foreign Language
Week 13: A Love for the Word of God
Week 14: Habit Training
Week 15: A Typical Daily Schedule
Week 16: Fantastic Charlotte Mason Resources

**Homework:**

Think seriously about the parent and teacher you want to be. Think about the goals you have for your children before they leave your home—character, academics, abilities, etc.

Think about your current style of homeschooling and whether or not it’s working. In other words, is it achieving the goals you have for your family (and is everyone joyfully on board)?

If you know you want to have a homeschool that is loving, serious, encourages character, allows time for passions, and more, then stick around for the remainder of this course. I think you’ll find the CM style to be a perfect fit.