

The general plan for all would be to have the child read in class a selection or series of selections from a standard author whose chief characteristic was the subject of study—clearness, energy, variety of synonyms, profuse use of figures, or humour. Call attention to the quality under consideration, analyze it as found in the author, and assign for individual work out of class the same sort of analysis of similar works. By frequent reading get the child's mind thoroughly familiar with that quality. This is a much slower process than one thinks till he has tried it. Have the pupil study first the perfect model until he knows that thoroughly, then it may be profitable for some students to analyze for faults, but frequently the hunt for imperfect examples is carried too far. Usually the best place for a student to study imperfections is in his own compositions.

An excellent exercise to produce facility of expression is the combination of detached statements and the transformation of elements. After a thorough training of this sort, the pupil, by the middle of the third year, is ready for the text-book study of rhetoric. By this time his mind is stored with illustrations from his previous reading and he is delighted to find that his scattered knowledge works into a complete system. The technical part of rhetoric is no longer dry and uninteresting to him, and he feels proud to think he possesses unconsciously so much knowledge.

The branch of English, however, that is nearest my heart is the study of literature. Of course in one sense the child has been studying English literature since he first began to read, and this miscellaneous reading is to be the basis for his formal study of its history. In English literature the scholar receives not only knowledge of its history, but culture from the contact with its forms of beauty.

The latter is fully as important as the former; indeed if obliged to choose one only, I should prefer the culture that comes from an intimate knowledge of English productions to the knowledge of its mere history. It is the imparting of culture that makes the teaching of English literature difficult. Culture cannot be taught, it must be imbibed unconsciously. To acquire a correct taste for the beautiful, man must be brought in daily contact with various forms of beauty till he knows them by instinct—acquired instinct—or beauty sense. This double object requires two methods of teaching which must run parallel—often be interwoven.

First by reason of our nationality we should take up American literature. This can be done as early as the junior year. By this time the students are supposed to know in general what literature is and to have read some American authors. It is presumed that they are ready now for a systematic study of the history of the literature.

One of my hobbies in this work is written reviews. I have them whenever the study of an author or group of authors is completed. Sometimes they are reproductions of what is read, sometimes answers to questions upon the author's style or life. A (historical) diagram or some portion of it I call for frequently. The scholars should be encouraged to bring to class any items they find in general reading, pertaining to any names in it. In this way they learn to clothe this skeleton with their daily reading.

I pursue the same general plan with the seniors in English literature. In making selections to read in class, from English authors, the question arises, How far back shall we go? I should answer, Go as far back as Chaucer, but do not begin with him.