

THE BIBLICAL EDUCATOR

"To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding" Proverbs 1:2

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THE LAST WILD RIDE OF MR. TOAD

By David Chilton

I've often thought that the following verse ought to be inscribed in foot-high letters, over the door of every Christian school: *Why is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, when he has no sense?* (Prov. 17:16, NASV) The implications of that question should be explained fully to each applicant, before his children are granted admission. The Christian school is in the business of training young men and women for dominion in every sphere of life. It is not in the business of babysitting fools.

Of course, foolishness is rooted in the heart of every child, and that is the reason for corporal punishment: the discipline drives out the foolishness, and delivers the child from hell (Prov. 22:15; 23:14). But those who are steadfast in their foolishness—regardless of the size of the "price in the hand" of their parents—are not worth the time and energy expended in the Christian school classroom. The *will to learn* is fundamental in education. If you *won't* learn, you *can't* learn.

Having said that much, it is necessary also to stress that the goal of Christian education is not to have a lot of straight-A students, either. Unfortunately, pressures from state education boards, which have placed the very existence of Christian schools in jeopardy, have encouraged us to concentrate on making sure our students produce better GPAs than do their state-school counterparts. Of course, since Christian education is integrated with Scripture as the foundation of learning—and since public schools contain a higher proportion of fools anyway—it is only natural that our students will succeed where others have failed.

We should, nevertheless, learn a lesson from the feminist movement: The Libbies are so busy trying to prove their superiority to *men* that they are miserable failures as *women*. Most *Christian women* have trouble coming up to the standards of Proverbs 31; but there isn't a Libbie in a million who's worthy to kiss the galoshes of the average Christian woman. My wife doesn't waste time trying to "prove" she's better than I am. Instead, she fulfills her calling with diligence, and—Lo and behold!—she *is* better than I am, in a vast array of tasks. The feminist is preoccupied with *domination*, and is incompetent; the Christian woman is occupied with *dominion*, and excels.

Christian schools are training students for maturity and responsibility in living. That goal is not *necessarily* achieved by imitating—or trying to outdo—the curriculum of the public schools. For example, I took a biology course in high school in which a good deal of time was spent cutting apart frogs and peering at their innards. How many frogs sacrificed their lives to the goddess of science, I wouldn't even attempt to calculate; but if you were an Orange County frog in those days, you hopped *fast*, or you wound up miliatingly disemboweled under the cruel blade of a clumsy sophomore, your destiny an ignominious end at the bottom of the garbage disposal five minutes before the lunch bell.

One "experiment" I'll always remember. The teacher strung up an obviously bewildered croaker to a miniature electric chair and

zapped him. The frog writhed and shook horribly. The teacher asked sweetly, "What do you think would happen if the frog didn't have a brain? Would the shock still affect him?" With our stomachs slowly inching up our throats, we answered *No*, wrongly assuming you need a brain in order to feel. (We should have taken a cue from our lovely instructor, who had a *brain* but no *feelings*.) "Let's see," she gleamed, and—still smiling—she handily snipped off the top of his head and yanked his brains out. She pushed the button again: *Zap!* Again the frog went into convulsions. So much for the Brain-Feeling Hypothesis. We were at a loss for words (our hands were covering our mouths anyway, so it didn't much matter). Seeing our dilemma, the dear lady brightly suggested a solution: "How about pulling out his spinal cord?" Before I could even begin shuddering, she hacked open the back of his neck, ripped out the backbone, and—*Zap!*—fried him again. This time, understanding at last what was expected of him, Mr. Toad displayed a true martyrlike disposition. He didn't move a muscle. And, in reward for his efforts, he was summarily flushed down the drain to join his fallen comrades. For my part, I was too sick to eat lunch that day, but I learned two lessons which I shall never forget: *One*, the central nervous system is connected to the spinal cord, not to the brain; *Two*, never judge a woman by her smile.

I would grant that the latter lesson served me well in life, and thus that the execution of that nameless little amphibian was not entirely in vain. But what about the first lesson? Was all this wanton carnage and destruction necessary for a bunch of gawky adolescents with terminal acne to understand the function of spinal cords? Admittedly—as I've already confessed—I never forgot the lesson. Nor do I deny anyone his constitutional privilege of gutting frogs. My argument is that the lesson could have been learned (though not as graphically) by looking at pictures in a textbook. Anyone who would thereby have been inspired to pursue biological studies—if only for the sadism involved—would have been able to get through the course, obtain his diploma, and head off for specialized training in college, where he could skewer all the frogs his perverse little heart desired.

This is only a minor illustration of a part of the problem. In most public schools, students are being "trained" for a number of specialized occupations, which few of them will ever fill. I am not making the usual plea for "relevance"—which, in translation, means teaching whatever the *student* sees as relevant. In order to live and work successfully, we need to study a great many things which we may not immediately perceive to be relevant. We *should* give our students a broad cultural base. But we need also to rethink the issue of curriculum, rather than merely baptize the public school version. And it won't do to return to the curriculum of our forefathers, although there may be some merit in that. Our students will be working in the twenty-first century, not the nineteenth. (Many Christian schools have broken their budgets buying up reprints of Webster's first edition, thus supplying their students with a dandy bit of etymology—but providing little in the way of defining the many new words or explaining the new definitions of old ones that the students have to deal with every day.)

My point is simply that our goal should not be to prepare our students to conform to the humanists' idea of a proper education (as helpful as that might be for a *secondary* goal: P.R.). We are training our students for *life*—a goal which will remain unrealized as long as we are content merely to borrow from the public schools.

If this article made you mad, wait til you see my next one, on homework! But don't just sit there: write a rebuttal (in about 1000 words) and send it in. If we publish it, you'll even get paid for your trouble. In fact, if you don't mind taking a risk, and really want to shoot for the big prize, you might try your hand at writing one called "Pro Bono Publico: The Virtue of Frogicide."

MAKING THE MOST OF LITERATURE

By Loretta J. Solomon

Formats for literature classes differ little. They include reading, writing, discussion, and testing of some form. Selected pieces of literature are chosen from a variety of authors, periods, and styles for study. Literature courses are sometimes considered easy, perhaps because there is not usually a great deal of memorizing or problem solving involved.

More can be gained from the study of literature than the knowledge of, or exposure to, great pieces. Literature is an excellent means of imparting an understanding of mankind, the order of the world, and how best to live within society. The direct effect of literature upon those who read it is also an important part of the study of literature, though it is seldom studied seriously.

If study of the effect of literature is rare, study of the ways and means of controlling its effect are even rarer. Consider why this is so. Literature is defined as being works of the imagination, read for enjoyment and enrichment. It is distinguished from propaganda, which is written with direct intent to influence the minds of people.

The problem with this differentiation is that it assumes that literature will not influence our opinions because it is not primarily written for that purpose. This is in error. It does influence the lives of those who read it, *and* it may or may not be written with the intent to sway the minds of the readers. Because any written work is an expression of the author, it naturally reflects the author's beliefs, either subtly or openly.

Literature is read, and meant to be read, as a realistic portrayal of life, in the sense that it is believable. If the reader at any time senses falsity or error he at once ceases to believe the story. He is forced out of the author's created world back into the real world with the thought, "That's not true!". Anyone who has experienced this knows how disconcerting it is. Therein lies a paradox. The reader knows that the work is fiction. It is not true. Nevertheless, he identifies with the characters and setting as if they were real.

The question, "Is the work realistic?" is certainly one of the most frequently asked questions in literature classes. Yet, it is a question which the Christian teacher should be ahead of. The question would be better stated, "Is the author's perception of reality accurate?". This may seem like an unimportant distinction, but it actually is not. The question is not how well the author portrayed reality, but did he perceive and record reality? Accepting an author's work as a portrayal of reality opens the reader up to the philosophy of the author. How so? Take for example a book with unacceptable moral standards depicted. If we identify with the characters as being real people and see them committing immoral deeds and suffering no ill effects, but prospering, we may assume that this course of events is possible. In reality, that is in opposition to what we know to be true.

The point must be stressed that literature is not either an accurate or inaccurate representation of the truth. It is merely one person's perception of the truth, either accurately represented or not. Emphasizing the presence of the author as a fallible human being will aid the student to better criticize the literature he reads. If the stu-

dent is consistently taught to consider everything he reads as merely the thoughts of another on what life consists of, he will at least be aware that it is not an accurate description of the truth, and that it is possible that the author is deliberately trying to promote his own beliefs.

A Christian teacher can do a lot to safe-guard his students from a misconception of truth. The above can be done within the public school system. The teacher in a Christian school can go a step further in supplying a defense against the onslaught of the printed page.

In a Christian school the teacher should place an emphasis on the fact that the writer is presenting his view of the world, *which of necessity is very different from ours if he is not a believer in Christ*. It can be pointed out that the author is writing about things as he sees them *without God*. The students should be urged to see how the author's view agrees or conflicts with the Bible. They should understand that our knowledge of life is not the standard for evaluation. The Bible is.

A Christian teacher can have a profound impact on his class if he is not afraid to ask hard questions and wait through the uncomfortable silence while students sort out their thoughts and seek support for their beliefs. How delightful it would be if students started carrying their Bibles to the literature class out of necessity, so that they would be able to deal with the problems they encounter there.

Though I do not suggest this particular work for study in class, I would like to take for example the book *Pavilion of Women* by Pearl S. Buck, who is an authoress frequently studied in high school literature classes. Because religion is openly discussed in the book it is not necessary to dig beneath the veneer of the characters to determine the author's beliefs. The author exuberantly praises "love" and its various effects on her main character, Madame Wu, who realizes that she is "in love" with a dead priest. Madame Wu lives out his teaching and is filled with love for everyone (except her husband), surprising herself and everyone else with all of her benevolent deeds.

A smattering of questions that could be asked in this case follows. Was Madame Wu's life really changed? Could someone actually be transformed by loving a dead man? Is this an attempt to draw an analogy to Christ? If so, what is wrong with it? Is anyone capable of true unselfish love who is unregenerate? Is Madame Wu's love valid when it fails to extend to her own husband? Does her refusal to accept the supernatural conflict with her acceptance of the incorporeal presence of the priest? Do the dead communicate with the living in the manner portrayed here, or at all?

The objective is to create honest thought in each student's mind, and by so doing, to teach them the process of literary criticism. Literary criticism does not come automatically by exposure to a variety of fine works. It comes from the endless comparing of each work read with what we know to be truth because it is presented in God's word and reflected in the world around us.

...AND PERHAPS A BIT MORE

By David Chilton

The preceding article by Loretta Solomon stresses an important aspect of literary studies—the analysis of a story's ethical and epistemological ax-grinding. This is, of course, very important, and I would not wish my readers to suppose that I am taking issue with Mrs. Solomon on that point.

And yet I would venture to guess that all literature teachers have faced difficulties when attempting to arouse interest among their students in such analysis. The minute you announce that *Moby Dick* is a "significant work," that it deals with metaphysical "problems," that it contains "striking literary motifs"—in short, that the students' duty will be, not to *read a story*, but to engage in *literary*

critique—you notice yawns, groans, clock-watching and other signs of general boredom. All interest in the story wilts, and what could have been a thoroughly enjoyable experience becomes bondage and drudgery. Such an approach does not, in the main, produce strong-hearted young men and women who relish the opportunity to read great works of literary art. Anything that smacks of "literature" will forever be shunned and abhorred.

We must also consider what are our goals in teaching literature in the first place. Is it our intention, for instance, to produce a generation of unemployed literary critics? Should it not be, rather, to instill in the children a love of reading, a familiarity with their cultural heritage, and an ability to write with style and ease?

If we really want the latter, let me offer some practical suggestions which seem to me to comprise a healthy approach. First, recognize that the *immediate* aim of whatever author you're assigning is to tell a story; and the work should be approached in that light. Even the Bible was not written as a systematic theology: it is a *story*. Yet I have often had young people approach me after a Bible lesson and say, "We never heard *that* before!" Well, they probably *had* heard it—told in a dull, flat monotone, the arresting humor or intense drama being overlooked in favor of an abstract "moral." Granted, Bible stories do have "morals" (if you want to call them that); but the stories are not written allegorically. They are preeminently stories, and they're supposed to be interesting. It is better, therefore, to read a work as a whole, to grasp the entire picture, before dwelling on exegetical concerns. The parts of the whole will be more readily understood when they are allowed to serve in their rightful place—as *parts*. Once the story has been read, absorbed and thrilled over, a discussion of its ingredients can be much more fruitful. (If the book was written or set in a sufficiently foreign time or place, a lecture on "background" may prove worthwhile. Just don't get pedantic. But if, for instance, you teach in Southern California, the children may need an explanation of such esoteric terms as *sleet*, *snow*, *hearth*, *hard work*, and *spanking*.)

Second, don't spend a whole semester on one or two books. Don't get bogged down. Let your students acquaint themselves with a wide number of authors, or several works by one author. Encourage them to read quickly. Spend a week on *Hamlet*, another on *Macbeth*, a third on *King Lear*, and a fourth on *The Tempest*; the fifth can be taken up with review and "motif-ing." Then take another five weeks on *As You Like It*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *Much Ado About Nothing*; and in half a semester, you'll have a class of young experts on Shakespeare—most of whom will have enjoyed the experience. Actually, the whole project can be completed in half the time I've outlined, but I'm being lenient. The point is, take things quickly enough to keep their interest.

Third, don't give your students the impression that all the truly great writers (a) have been dead for centuries, or (b) wrote only "serious" books. If you do feel compelled to assign ancient authors, try some Aristophanes—selectively, of course. *Lysistrata* isn't recommended, but *The Clouds* is fun, particularly if you want to take a poke at Socrates. Or, racing ahead a few years, why not assign *The Deerslayer* and cap it off with Mark Twain on "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses"? And, speaking of Twain, you should introduce your students to his books and stories that are somewhat off the beaten trail. The standard set of his works contains two-dozen volumes; most of his stories are unknown to modern readers. Or how about George Ade? Does *anyone* remember him? He was one of the best humorists America ever produced, and nobody knows him any more. Some of his *Fables in Slang* are available from Dover Publications, and you ought to become acquainted with them. Believe me, kids love George Ade—and he offers ample material for all the critique you'll ever want. Finally, no student should ever be allowed to consider himself well-educated unless he has familiarized himself with the works of P.G. Wodehouse. To think

that millions manage to pull themselves through life without receiving the daily comfort and inspiration afforded by a well-stocked Wodehouse library is baffling to the imagination, and shocking to all cultured sensibilities. A classroom of young people immersed in such literary gems as *Laughing Gas* and *Leave It To Psmith*—to say nothing of *The World of Mr. Mulliner*—will be filled with enough gaiety and merriment to rival the Weather Underground celebrating Bastille Day.

Perhaps Wodehouse does not conform to your personal canons of great art: so be it. Even those of a less-refined taste can appreciate my fundamental argument, which is that our approach to reading, and our attempt to introduce young minds to great literature, should strive to avoid all appearance of stuffiness. The classics did not become classics by dint of the fact that their authors happened to be dead. After all, even lousy writers die eventually. The classics became classics because they were enjoyable to read (with the possible exception of Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail*, which has enough weather and scenery to provide all the reasonable requirements of a good fifteen average-sized books; but Parkman seemed to feel that the pressing question on Posterity's mind would be: "How *much* rain, to be exact?"). I don't know why, but every time a book achieves the status of a classic, people the world over begin to regard it as a colossal bore. Perhaps one reason for this reaction is that they learned to regard the Lit classroom as a laboratory, in which books are not loved but dissected.

Again, I am not saying we should not, at some point, and to some degree, dismantle an author's work in order to take a closer look. But that is just my point: *Analysis should aid perception!* (Naturally, I would exclude government-funded studies from consideration in such a sweeping remark.) The students should feel that their study of a book's minutiae is enabling them to understand and enjoy the whole.

A common failing of those who are (rightly) convinced of the importance of correct doctrine is the tendency to view all things with an excessive dogmatism. The life and beauty of a work of art is disregarded, and all we want to know is whether the author's epistemology is sound. Now, we *should* be concerned about dogmatic aspects of a given work; but to see these as *everything* is *rationalism* (just as the ignoring of dogma is *mysticism*). The Reformed teacher, therefore, has a tall order to fill. He must train his students to analyze the theology (or anti-theology) presented in a work, without neglecting the artistic beauty it displays; he must instill in them a love of beauty wherever they find it, and at the same time the discernment to "test the spirits." The fact that this task is so difficult should not lead us to abandon it for the "easy" way. It should, rather, drive us to work harder—for, through it all, we are really teaching one of the most important lessons our students will ever learn: that Jesus Christ is the Lord of culture, and thus all things can be understood—and *enjoyed*—in submission to Him.

A TEXTBOOK FOR A FIREARMS CLASS

By David Chilton

It has already been suggested in these pages that an excellent addition to the Christian school curriculum would be a class on the use of firearms. I assume that the readers of *The Biblical Educator* are sufficiently familiar with ICE materials to render a lengthy defense of self-defense unnecessary. It is enough merely to state that in a world of sin, we will never have peace so long as the only ones who have the artillery are the bad guys. Micah 5 contains the famous prophecy that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem; it is the rare Christian, however, who has bothered even to read the rest of the chapter, which foretells the results of Christ's advent. In particular, said Micah, the coming of the Savior will have two effects on God's people: (1) They "shall be in the midst of many people as a dew

from the LORD," spreading a gracious, refreshing, restorative influence throughout the world (v.7); (2) They shall be "in the midst of many people as a lion. . . who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver" (v.8). In other words, there is a time to be dew, and a time to be a lion; a time for gentleness, and a time for wrath; in our Lord's example (John 2), a time to make wine, and a time to make "a scourge of small cords." It would be a powerful restraint on the wrath of the ungodly if even the youngsters in every Covenant home were widely known to be skilled in the use of weapons, willing and able to blow the belt buckles off of any prospective marauder. Ergo, start a firearms class *now*.

Along with teaching the proper use and care of weapons, however, you will need to instruct the children about our constitutional right to bear arms, and the ways to defend that right against the attacks of the totalitarians in our midst. The best all-around handbook for this is *The Rights of Gun Owners*, by Alan M. Gottlieb (Caroline House Publishers, Inc., 920 West Industrial Drive, Aurora, IL 60506; or call 312-897-2050), available in paperback for \$5.95. Alan Gottlieb is a recognized authority on the subject of his book: he is Chairman of the Citizens' Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms, President of the Second Amendment Foundation, and Treasurer of the American Conservative Union. *The Rights of Gun Owners* is necessary reading for all those concerned about preserving this important aspect of our constitutional liberties, and its question-and-answer format makes it very suitable for classroom use.

Gottlieb begins with an enlightening discussion of the *secondary* basis of the right to keep and bear arms—common law and the Constitution (the *fundamental* basis—Scripture—is not mentioned, but you ought to be able to handle that yourself). One issue in the debate over arms, used as smokescreen by the anti-gun crowd, is the meaning of *militia* in the Second Amendment, and Gottlieb clears the air with a brief but scholarly treatment, citing Founding Fathers and Supreme Court decisions. Unfortunately, he also refers to the Fourteenth Amendment as a bulwark against confiscation of arms. It *may* be that, but I doubt it. More important, however, is the fact that the Fourteenth Amendment should not be made the basis of *any* appeal, if we can help it. In the first place, the Fourteenth Amendment was an attempt by the Radical Republicans to destroy the Federalist intent of the Constitution, by exalting the powers of the national government over those of the states; it is a dangerous piece of statist legislation, and should be avoided as much as possible. In the second place, *the Fourteenth Amendment is illegal*: it was ratified unconstitutionally, and we should work to excise it from the Constitution. (For an excellent study of this matter, see Felix Morley's *Freedom and Federalism*, published last year by the Liberty Fund, 7440 North Shadeland, Indianapolis, IN 46250). As important as our right to self-defense is, it is not the *only* issue facing us. We need to stay alert on all fronts. A sloppy justification of *one* right could easily undermine *all* rights.

Gottlieb's second chapter explores the unconstitutionality, inadequacies and internal contradictions of gun-control legislation,

and its ultimate goal: "a disarmed populace," as one anti-gun advocate bluntly states it. This chapter also includes some helpful information on crime, with examples of the kind of legislation we *do* need. Gottlieb's perspective is not merely negative; he suggests positive alternatives.

In his third chapter Gottlieb goes on to describe the U.S. Gestapo in action. You didn't know we had a Gestapo? Wake up, folks: we've got *two* of them—the Internal Revenue Service, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF). It is wrong to assume that all bureaucrats are gray-colored little Milquetoasts hiding behind briefcases. These guys are blood-red, and they carry lots of hardware. The BATF really came into its own after the infamous Gun Control Act of 1968 was passed, and BATF goons ever since have understood that to be their personal license to raid, terrorize, assault and shoot private citizens. The usual tactic of BATF gangsters is entrapment—conning innocent citizens into committing some violation of one of the many technicalities of the Gun Control Act. When simple trickery fails, they hire thugs to beat up "suspects" in order to get them to break the law. Occasionally, when business hits a slump, they do what they did to Ken Ballew in Maryland: BATF hoods broke into his home—allegedly on a search for unregistered guns and hand grenades—and when Ballew tried to defend himself (thinking they were *common* criminals, instead of *tax-supported* criminals), they shot him in the head. Ballew was permanently paralyzed by the attack. (Oh, by the way: it's a minor, trivial point, hardly worth mentioning at all, but *no unregistered guns or grenades were discovered*. Mistakes will happen, won't they?) BATF storm troopers have even posed as members of the Mafia at times; one wishes they would complete the job by adhering religiously to Bugsy Siegel's famous motto: "We only kill each other." Shucks, I'd even donate the ammunition.

The book continues with very practical helps for those who are arrested or on trial for firearms violations (remember, the time to get this book is *before* you get busted), and some advice on what to do, and what *not* to do, when you feel you may have to use your gun to defend your life or property. (For example, "most states even frown upon a gun owner using his firearm to discourage a vandal from fleeing, while he awaits the arrival of the police," according to Gottlieb.) But the most helpful sections of the book are chapters 6 and 7, which summarize, in easy-to-read outlines, all the federal and state laws pertaining to firearms. If you can figure out which state you live in, just turn to the appropriate page and shrug in disbelief. Some state regulations are surprising; then again, some aren't. This guide may help you if you're planning to move to another state.

Gottlieb closes the volume with almost 60 pages of appendices, covering bibliographies, lists of BATF field offices in every state (presumably, so you'll know where *not* to relocate), the full text of the Gun Control Act and other laws. These are not included for padding, but in order for us to know what we're up against—so that we can *change* the laws.

If you own a gun, and if you want to *keep* owning it, read *The Rights of Gun Owners*.

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