



The Cardinal Newman Society's



Selected Reading List, Rubric, and Rationale  
for Catholic Education

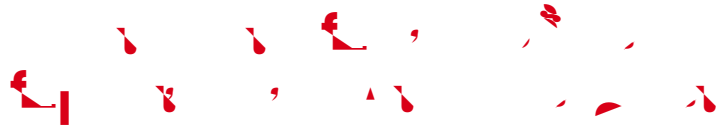
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Catholic education seeks to “bring human wisdom into an encounter with divine wisdom,”<sup>1</sup> cultivate “in students the intellectual, creative, and aesthetic faculties of the human person,” prepare them for professional life and to take on the duties of society and the Church, and introduce a cultural heritage.<sup>2</sup> Literature is an essential tool in Catholic education, helping impart “a Christian vision of the world, of life, of culture, and of history” and an ordering of “the whole of human culture to the news of salvation.”<sup>3</sup>

***Literature “strive[s] to make known the proper nature of man, his problems and his experiences in trying to know and perfect both himself and the world.”<sup>4</sup>***

Because Catholic education strives for the perfection of its students and the world, literature is a natural and important part of that mission. At its best, it invites truthful exploration of the human condition — the development of the aesthetic sense of the soul.

these might attract immature fancy or spark debate. Careful curation and guidance are needed to avoid possible confusion, error, indifference, or despair. Young people encountering weighty issues antithetical to the faith and without proper guidance may be manipulated by outside forces or their own youthful presumption, impertinence, or prejudice.

It is the role of a Catholic educator to suggest and model a response to the critical questions provoked in carefully chosen works in order to provide a coherent and consistent Catholic understanding to help youth manage their shifting viewpoints and come to a mature and freely-chosen understanding of reality and its faith-based moorings.<sup>8</sup> The Catholic teacher is model and mentor, not an aloof and uncommitted purveyor of unevaluated content. All literature must be critically and systematically evaluated and transmitted in the light of faith.

***Because Catholic education's mission is different from that of secular schools, its libraries and its selection and use of literature should reflect these differences and serve the higher aims of Catholic education.***

The mission of Catholic education is uniquely focused on the integral formation of students' minds, hearts, and bodies in truth, health, and holiness. Catholic education is committed to the pursuit of truth and seeks to explore the harmony between truth and beauty. Catholic education is also concerned with the eternal salvation of its students and Christian service to promote the good.<sup>9</sup> Catholic educators should approach literature with an eye toward the impact it has on this mission and the right ordering of the intellect, will, imagination, and spirit.

The exploration of literature in Catholic education must never work against the mission by leading students into sin, driving them to despair, or impairing their ability to understand and serve the common good. This concern is greatest in the youngest ages, while older students can be carefully assisted to make right choices and judgments through reading works that present increasingly complex and even mistaken material. Care should always be taken to avoid confusion and scandal. Catholic educators should place priority on publications of substantial quality and educational value, including Catholic spiritual formation. Great care must be exercised as older students grow in their awareness and exposure to man in his fallen state. Such knowledge can then be used to better serve the redemptive and evangelical role that Catholic education also serves.<sup>10</sup>

In Catholic education, curricular programs and school libraries ought not simply replicate their secular counterparts. Their mission is not to present uncritically all possible human thought and viewpoints, but to present the best literature critically and in the context of a Catholic worldview. Students, in a developmentally appropriate way, need to be exposed to seminal works of literature, drama, and poetry.<sup>11</sup> Catholic educators can make use of non-Christian sources and of books which present non-Catholic understandings of critical human issues, but these should not remain unchallenged or leave students spiritually or humanly damaged in the process. Accounts of the human experience that are opposed to a Christian understanding of the world can be appropriate for older students who are well-formed and have a good foundation.

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8 The general educational approach in this section is proposed by Luigi Giussani in his book *The Risk of Education* (Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001). See esp. pp. 55-65.

9 *Code of Canon Law* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1983) 795.

10 Congregation for Catholic Education (1988) 66, 69.

11 There are many lists of literature and spirituality which might be considered part of the "Great Books" in general and the Catholic intellectual tradition in particular.

Such accounts may at times be edgy and uncomfortable but must not be extreme, they should not be left unchallenged, and they should not put a student at spiritual or emotional risk. A Christian humanism, founded in the Catholic intellectual tradition that focuses on the best in literature and the arts, can provide for a balanced approach in forming students to critically examine their contemporary experiences.

Finally, it must also be remembered that literature, and especially Western literature, is not just a tool for personal and spiritual formation but a field of study in itself. Especially at the upper high school level, works of literature need to be considered as distinct elements in particular academic fields, with its own specific logic and methodology of design, study, and evaluation. Students should learn to appreciate the works' historical development and interactions. Great works of literature are not only tools of human formation and artifacts helpful in the development of academic knowledge but also



: We want our library holdings to be broad and varied, not limited by Catholic sensitivities or by only weighty content. Shouldn't we let students read and view what interests them, not what we pre-determine for them?

: Educators do not take this view when a school provides lunch or snacks. We give students a choice of healthy options suited to the conditions. If the goal is just to get kids to put something in their mouths, then cotton candy and soda will undoubtedly serve this end better than carrots and grapes. But if the goal is to teach them to appreciate healthy, natural food and build their physical well-being and strength, then candy and chips (which are not bad in and of themselves) may get in the way of something better like juice and crackers.

In the same way, we want rich and varied literature and art which will help build the health of students' minds, souls, and imaginations. Cynical, dark, titillating, disordered, vain, bitter, or completely frivolous fiction may get in the way of an encounter with more difficult but meaningful and formative materials, which serve a higher end. There are more good and great books and art to experience than any one student can handle, so there is no shortage of material to take the place of the mediocre, meaningless, or malformed material flooding much of the market today.

: Shouldn't we let the English teachers decide for their classrooms and the librarian decide for the library? They are the content experts, after all.

: Curriculum and library holdings should be driven by the mission of Catholic education, not by varied teacher strengths and interests or a librarian who may or







Before students begin a text, it is helpful that teachers provide a list of questions, items, or concepts to identify as they read. These might be guided by essential questions, or they might come from the Transcendental Taxonomy<sup>13</sup> created by The Cardinal Newman Society to draw out the truth, goodness, and beauty (or their opposites) in any text or study. They might also focus on basic questions such as:

- Are there acts of virtue and vice presented in the text, and how does the author portray these acts throughout the text?
- What are the assumptions or propositions the author makes about the nature of man, God, family, society, and creation?
- What major emotions do you feel while reading certain sections of the text, especially the end?
- How does the author approach God's graciousness, presence, and transcendence?
- Is there a deeper meaning the author is trying to convey here?
- Is there anything in this text that elevates my soul to God?

Instruct the students in how to annotate the text. Have them always read with a pencil or pen in hand and liberally highlight, underline, mark, or make comments in the margins about:

- things that delight them;
- things they find discomfoting or confusing;
- phrases or descriptions they find striking or beautiful;
- significant passages they believe seem to capture the main themes of the text/author; and
- passages which might help them identify any focus concepts or essential questions.

These highlights can help them anchor their later class discussions and writings in the text and provide points to develop deeper exploration.

Other questions to consider:

- Imagine your favorite saint just read this book. What would be the points of conversation between the two of you?
- What characters attracted you/repulsed you, and why?
- How does this measure up in terms of a Catholic worldview, values, and human redemption?
- Sum up "the moral of the story" in one sentence from the author's point of view, and, if different, your own.
- Did reading the text reveal to you anything new about yourself or help you grow in any way?

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<sup>13</sup> <https://cardinalnewmansociety.org/wp-content/uploads/Transcendental-Taxonomy.pdf>



School/Course: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of selection: \_\_\_\_\_

Rubric score: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for score:

How the Catholic faith will be integrated into teaching the selection:

Compelling reason(s) for selecting this piece for students:

Areas of concern (if any) and what supports will be put into place:

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This list suggests options for Catholic educators and is not intended as an exhaustive list of all possible texts. Titles with an asterisk (\*) are suggested

Favorite Uncle Remus (Harris)  
Flower Fables (Alcott)  
Frederick (Lionni)  
Frog and Toad Series (Lobel)  
Harold and the Purple Crayon (Johnson)  
Heavenly Hosts: Eucharistic Miracles for Kids (Swegart)  
Heidi (Spyri)  
If You Give a Mouse a Cookie (Numeroff)  
Homer Price (McCloskey)  
Just So Stories (Kipling)  
Lentil (McCloskey)  
Little Britches (Moody)  
Little House in the Big Woods (Wilder)  
Little House on the Prairie (Wilder)  
Little Lord Fauntleroy (Burnett)  
Madeline (Bemelmans)  
Make Way for Ducklings (McCloskey)  
Mama, Do You Love Me? (Joosse)  
Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel (Burton)  
Millions of Cats (Gag)  
Mirette on the High Wire (McCully)  
Molly McBride and the Purple Habit (Schoonover-Egolf)  
Mr. Popper's Penguins (Atwater)  
Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH Series (O'Brien)  
Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters (Step toe)\*  
Nate the Great Series (Sharmat)  
On the Banks of Plum Creek (Wilder)  
Owl Moon (Yolen)  
Ox-Cart Man (Hall)  
Papa Piccolo (Talley)  
Peppe the Lamplighter (Barton)\*  
Peter Pan (Barrie)  
Pinocchio (Collodi)

The Elves and the Shoemaker (Galdone)  
The Emperor's New Clothes (Hans Christian Andersen)  
The Five Chinese Brothers (Bishop and Wiese)  
The Little Engine That Could (Piper)  
The Little Flower: A Parable of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux (Arganbright and Arvidson)  
The Long Winter (Wilder)  
The Lost World (Doyle)  
The Moffats (Estes)  
The Mystery at Midnight (Hendey)  
The Princess and the Kiss (Bishop)  
The Quiltmaker's Gift (Brumbeau)\*  
The Reluctant Dragon (Grahame)  
The Secret Garden (Burnett)  
The Selfish Giant and Other Stories (Wilde)  
The Snowy Day (Keats)  
The Story About Ping (Fleck and Wiese)  
The Story of Ferdinand (Leaf)  
The Story of Peter Rabbit (Potter)  
The Swiss Family Robinson (Wyss)  
The Trumpet of the Swan (White)  
The Twenty-One Balloons (Du Bois)  
The Velveteen Rabbit (Williams)  
The Very Hungry Caterpillar (Carle)  
The Wind in the Willows (Grahame)  
These Happy Golden Years (Wilder)  
Through the Looking Glass (Carroll)  
Treasure Box Set (Maryknoll Sisters)  
Ugly Duckling (Hans Christian Andersen)  
Wee Gillis (Leaf)  
Where the Wild Things Are (Sendak)  
Winnie the Pooh (Milne)



A Christmas Carol (Dickens)  
A Story of Joan of Arc (Earnest)  
A Wrinkle in Time (L'Engle)  
Ablaze: Stories of Daring Teen Saints (Swaim)  
Across Five Aprils (Hunt)  
Across the Plains (Stevenson)  
Adam of the Road (Gray)  
All Creatures Great and Small (Herriott)  
Amos Fortune, Free Man (Yates)  
An Old Fashioned Girl (Alcott)  
Anne of Green Gables (Montgomery)  
Around the World in Eighty Days (Verne)

Beowulf: A New Telling (Nye)  
Black Beauty (Sewell)  
Black Stallion (Farley)  
Beric the Briton (Henty)  
Black Ships Before Troy: The Story of the Iliad (Lee)  
Blessed Marie of New France (Windeatt)  
Bonnie Prince Charlie (Henty)  
By Pike and Dyke (Henty)  
Caddie Woodlawn (Brink)  
Captains Courageous (Kipling)  
Cricket on the Hearth (Dickens)  
Cyrano de Bergerac (Rostand)  
David Copperfield (Dickens)  
Death Comes for the Archbishop (Cather)  
Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (Stevenson)  
Facing Death (Henty)  
Fingal's Quest (Pollard)  
For the Temple (Henty)  
Forget Not Love: The Passion of Maximilian Kolbe (Frossad)  
From the Earth to the Moon (Verne)  
Gentle Ben (Morey)  
Great Expectations (Dickens)  
Hans Brinker (Dodge)  
Helen Keller: The Story of My Life (Keller)  
Hero of the Hills (Windeatt)  
Holy Twins: Benedict and Scholastica (Norris)  
I Am David (Holm)  
I, Juan de Pareja (De Trevino)  
If All the Swords in England (Willard)  
In Freedom's Cause (Henty)  
In the Reign of Terror (Henty)  
Jack and Jill (Alcott)  
Jo's Boys (Alcott)  
Johnny Tremain (Forbes)  
Journey to the Center of the Earth (Verne)  
Kidnapped (Stevenson)  
King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table (Green)  
King of the Wind (Henry)  
Lay Siege to Heaven (De Wohl)  
Leif the Lucky (D'Aulaire)  
Lilies of the Field (Barrett)  
Little Men (Alcott)  
Little Women (Alcott)  
Log of a Cowboy (Adams)  
Madeline Takes Command (Brill and Adams)  
Misty of Chincoteague (Henry)  
My Ántonia (Cather)



My Side of the Mountain (George)  
Mysterious Island (Verne)  
Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (Douglass)  
Number the Stars (Lowry)  
O Pioneers (Cather)  
Old Yeller (Gipson)  
Oliver Twist (Dickens)  
Our Town (Wilder)  
Patron Saint of First Communicants (Windeatt)  
Penrod and others (Tarkington)  
Pied Piper of Hamelin (Browning)  
Radiate: More Stories of Daring Teen Saints (Swaim)  
Red Hugh Prince of Donegal (Reilly)  
Redwall Series (Jacques)  
Rip Van Winkle (Irving)  
Robin Hood (Pyle)  
Robinson Crusoe (Defoe)  
Rolf and the Viking Bow (French)  
Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry (Taylor)  
Saint Benedict: The Story of the Father of the Western Monks (Windeatt)  
Saint Catherine of Siena (Forbes)  
Saint Dominic (Windeatt)  
Saint Helena and the True Cross (De Wohl)  
Saint Hyacinth of Poland (Windeatt)  
Saint John Masias (Windeatt)  
Saint Martin de Porres (Windeatt)  
Saint Monica (Forbes)  
Saint Rose of Lima (Windeatt)  
Saint Thomas Aquinas (Windeatt)  
Sarah Plain and Tall (Wilder)  
Son of Charlemagne (Willard)  
Sounder (Armstrong)  
St. Benedict, Hero of the Hills (Windeatt)  
St. Joan, The Girl Soldier (De Wohl)  
St. Patrick (Tompert)  
St. Thomas Aquinas for Children (Maritain)  
Tales of King Arthur (Talbot)  
Tanglewood Tales (Hawthorne)  
Tarzan Series (Burroughs)  
The Adventures of Robin Hood

The Children of Fatima (Windeatt)  
The Children's Homer (Colum)  
The Chronicles of Narnia (Lewis)  
The Deerslayer (Cooper)  
The Dragon and the Raven (Henty)  
The Fellowship of the Ring (Tolkien)  
The Fledgling (Langton)  
The Gift of the Magi (O. Henry)  
The Hiding Place (ten Boom)  
The Hobbit (Tolkien)  
The Horse and His Boy (Lewis)  
The Hound of the Baskervilles (Doyle)  
The Innocence of Father Brown [or others] (Chesterton)  
The Island of the Blue Dolphins (O'Dell)  
The Jungle Book (Kipling)  
The Knight of the White Cross (Henty)  
The Last Battle (Lewis)  
The Last of the Mohicans (Cooper)  
The Legend of Sleepy Hollow (Irving)  
The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe (Lewis)  
The Little Flower (Windeatt)  
The Little Prince (Saint-Exupéry)  
The Lord of the Rings (Tolkien)  
The Miracle Worker (Gibson)  
The Miraculous Medal (Windeatt)  
The Oregon Trail (Parkman)  
The Pearl (Steinbeck)  
The Prince and the Pauper (Twain)  
The Ransom of Red Chief, and Other Stories (O. Henry)  
The Railway Children (Nesbit)  
The Red Badge of Courage (Crane)  
The Red Keep (French)  
The Restless Flame (De Wohl)  
The Song at the Scaffold (Von le Fort)  
The Spear: A Novel of the Crucifixion (De Wohl)  
The Story of King Arthur and His Knights (Pyle)  
The Story of Our Lady of Guadalupe (Walsh)  
The Story of Rolf and the Viking Bow (French)

The Yearling (Rawlings)  
Thomas Aquinas and the Preaching Beggars (Larnen and Lomask)  
Tom Sawyer (Twain)  
Treasure Island (Stevenson)  
Tuck Everlasting (Babbit)  
Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea (Verne)  
Two Years Before the Mast (Dana)  
Uncle Tom's Cabin (Stowe)  
Under the Lilacs (Alcott)  
Westward Ho (Kingsley)  
Where the Lilies Bloom (Cleaver)  
Where the Red Fern Grows (Rawls)  
White Fang (London)  
With Wolfe in Canada (Henty)  
Won by the Sword (Henty)  
Work (Alcott)



A Good Man is Hard to Find (O'Connor)  
A Man for All Seasons (Bolt)  
A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (Joyce)  
A Tale of Two Cities (Dickens)  
A New Voyage Round the World (Dampier)  
Aeneid [excerpts] (Virgil)  
Agamemnon, Libation Bearers, Eumenides (Aeschylus)  
An Enemy of the People (Ibsen)  
Animal Farm (Orwell)  
Beowulf (trans. Tolkien)  
Billy Budd, Bartleby the Scrivener, and other short stories (Melville)  
Brideshead Revisited (Waugh)  
Brothers Karamazov or Crime and Punishment (Dostoyevsky)  
Canterbury Tales [excerpts] (Chaucer)  
Citadel of God: A Novel about St. Benedict (De Wohl)  
Come Rack! Come Rope! (Benson)  
Death of a Salesman (Miller)  
Diary of a Country Priest (Bernanos)  
Doctor Faustus (Marlow)  
Doctor Zhivago (Pasternak)  
Don Quixote (Cervantes)  
El Cid (trans. Racine)  
Emma (Austen)  
Frankenstein (Shelley)  
Great Expectations (Dickens)  
Gulliver's Travels (Swift)  
Huckleberry Finn (Twain)  
Jane Eyre (Bronte)

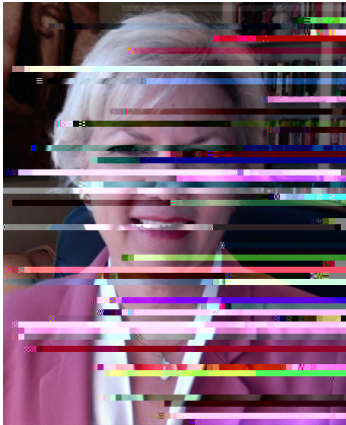
Joan of Arc (Twain)  
Kim (Kipling)  
Kristin Lavransdatter (Undset)  
Lieutenant Hornblower Series (Forester)  
Le Morte D'Arthur (Malory)  
Les Misérables (Hugo)  
Lord Jim (Conrad)  
Lord of the Flies (Golding)  
Man in the Iron Mask (Dumas)  
Medea, The Trojan Women, The Bacchae (Euripides)  
Metamorphoses [excerpts] (Ovid)  
Mill on the Floss [others] (Eliot)  
Moonstone [and others] (Collins)  
Murder in the Cathedral (T.S. Eliot)  
Notes from Underground (Dostoevsky)  
Oedipus the King, Oedipus at Colonus, AntiCDIT-183va/MCID 100secle



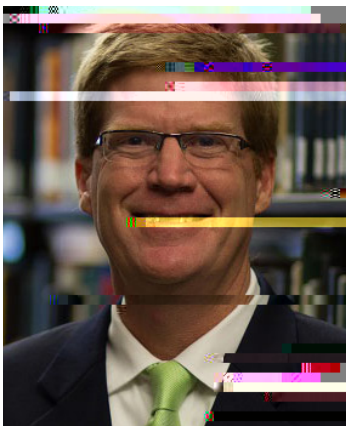
The Life of St. Francis of Assisi [excerpts] (St. Bonaventure)  
The Practice of the Presence of God (Brother Lawrence)  
The Rule of St. Benedict  
The Screwtape Letters, Mere Christianity, The Abolition of Man (Lewis)  
The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius (St. Ignatius of Loyola)  
The Story of a Soul (St. Thérèse of Lisieux)  
True Devotion to Mary (St. Louis de Montfort)



Apology, Dialogues, Euthyphro, Republic [excerpts] (Plato)  
Autobiography (Franklin)  
Democracy in America [selections] (De Tocqueville)  
Funeral Oration (Pericles)  
Harvard Address and/or Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech (Solzhenitsyn)  
Humanae Vitae (St. Paul VI)  
I Have a Dream (King)  
Letter from a Birmingham Jail (King)  
Meditations (Marcus Aurelius)  
Nicomachean Ethics, Book I (Aristotle)  
Night (Wiesel)  
Politics, Book I (Aristotle)  
Self-Reliance (Emerson)  
Slave Narratives (Douglass, Jacobs)  
The Communist Manifesto (Marx)  
The Conquest of Gaul (Caesar)  
The Declaration of Independence  
The Documents of Vatican II [selections]  
The Federalist Papers [selections] (Hamilton, et al.)  
The Gettysburg Address (Lincoln)  
The Gulag Archipelago [Abridged] (Solzhenitsyn)  
The Histories [selections] (Herodotus)  
The Magna Carta  
The Prince (Machiavelli)  
The Rights of Man (Paine)  
The Social Contract (Rousseau)  
Treatise on Law and excerpts from other works (Aquinas)  
The United States Constitution  
Veritatis Splendor (St. John Paul II)



is vice president for educator resources and evaluation at The Cardinal Newman Society. She earned her doctorate in educational leadership, with a concentration in curriculum development and a dissertation on the establishment of private, independent Catholic schools. She has served as interim chair and visiting assistant professor of a college education department, founder and principal of a Catholic high school, founder and religion coordinator for a Catholic grade school, and assistant head of a Catholic K-12 school.



is education policy editor and a senior fellow at The Cardinal Newman Society. He is an associate professor of education and director of the M.Ed. in Catholic School Leadership at Ave Maria University. He earned his doctorate in educational administration and holds a master's degree in English and educational administration and an active state licensure in English. He has worked for over 30 years in Catholic education as a teacher and a principal at the K-12 level and as an associate professor, department chair, dean of education, and president at the college level.

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