

# **Christ Classical Academy Yearly Reading Program:**

## **Magnus Lector**

Just as good, nutritious food is necessary for the body to grow and function optimally, so too are good books necessary for the growth and optimal functioning of the mind. Good and great books are food for thoughts. The CCA reading program, Magnus Lector, aims to provide students with a steady diet of good books (and eventually great books as their abilities advance and as they mature), which will accomplish the following in our students' intellectual and spiritual lives of the mind: equip students with a Biblical Worldview, introduce them to their spiritual and cultural heritage and history, initiate a love of learning, and motivate them to contemplate the great enduring truths of human life. Chosen books should stretch the student's ability in reading for understanding and thinking about particular ideas, themes or topics. Compare a reading program to weight lifting: an athlete does not increase his strength by continuing to lift only the bar without successive weights added. Similarly, a child will not improve in his reading ability if the level of reading difficulty never increases. A healthy and active mind comes about from nurture, exercise, training, and discipline in the arts of reading and thinking.

Through this required program, students will begin to develop an appreciation of the great books (Classics), and other good books. A classic is a work of literature which has been read and enjoyed for several generations. Exceptions are made for "good" books of acclaim (Newberry/Caldecott Award winners, etc). It is our job as educators and parents to see that our children acquire not only the ability to read well but also to acquire a taste for what is good and beautiful in literature. When choosing books for this aim, several factors are considered (adapted from <http://www.classical-homeschooling.org/celoop/1000.html#list>).

Does the book have literary merit (will it survive as a good representation of the morals and values we hold as Christians, does it teach us anything about God and his creation, is it written beautifully, or is it trite and worthy of current popular cultural tastes, etc.)?

Does it embody a Biblical World View?

Does it embody truth, goodness, beauty, justice, courage, honesty, valor, and other values to which we want our children exposed?

Does the story have lasting value, and can it be enjoyed by many ages of readers?

Does it challenge the intellect, and/or excite the imagination?

Does it introduce the reader to some aspect of our spiritual, historical, or cultural heritage?

In addition to exposing our children's minds what is true, good, and beautiful in literature, we seek to give our students an essential foundation in the literature of the Western Culture. Thus, the contents of the books (their stories, ideas, and themes) are as important as any of their literary merits and the excitations of kids' imaginations. This will prove most helpful to students as they grow and mature in their intellectual pursuits both at CCA and in their adult lives. This is the basis for any quality liberal arts education.

Mortimer Adler, American philosopher, educator, and editor of the Britannica “Great Books” series, stated in his book *How to Read a Book* that there are “...matters about which you cannot think too much or too well. The greatest books can help you think better about them...” (Adler and Van Doren, 1972).

In the book, *The Well-Trained Mind*, authors Susan Wise Bauer and Jessie Wise suggest the following when considering a reading program:

“...away from “McBooks”. Juvenile horror books and teen romances are written in three-page bites to hold short attention spans; challenging vocabulary and sentence structure are avoided; moral themes are nonexistent. These books do not improve reading skills. Instead, they train a young reader to favor books that are easily grasped, consumed in an hour, and tossed away. The child who had developed an R.L. Stine habit may find *A Little Princess* or *Little Women* indigestible.” (Wise Bauer and Wise, 1999)

For these reason we excluded many of the more popular books that many of our children enjoy, such as “Sweet Valley High”, “Goosebumps”, and even the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew series. What distinguishes many new(er) and/or popular titles from good and great books is their inability to transcend above the obvious, practical, and the immediate. Most of them only entertain. Parents are of course always free to decide what books their children read, but for the purposes of our reading program, we will leave these kinds of titles free for their children’s enjoyments outside of Lector recognition.

Candidates for your child’s yearly reading program can be found in four places. Short lists of approved books, according to grade level are available on the CCA Website. Students may read books from other grade levels as approved by their teachers as appropriate. In addition to the official Lectitare List, there is a list of historical fiction/ adventure titles written by G. A. Henty, to be enjoyed by students in any grade, as well as a list of Puffin Classics for students of any grade (parents may read aloud to children who are not able to successfully read and enjoy these titles independently). More books can be found at the following web site: <http://www.classical-homeschooling.org/celoop/1000.html#list>. Illustrated classics are permitted for students until the end of fourth grade.

Each student will read one book and complete a report each quarter, including the summer reading, for a total of five (5) books, and complete for each of the five titles read the full two-page Lector Log. In this way, each student will be recognized as “Magnus Lector”. Higher recognition is as follows:

K	Semester 1			Semester 2		Yearly Total
	Q1	Q2		Q3	Q4	
Magnus	2	1	3	1	1	5
Summus	5	5	10	5	5	20
Extremus	6	6	12	6	6	24

\*Q1 includes the summer book.

1ST	Semester 1			Semester 2		Yearly Total
	Q1	Q2		Q3	Q4	
Magnus	2	1	3	1	1	5
Summus	5	5	10	5	5	20
Extremus	6	6	12	6	6	24

2ND	Semester 1			Semester 2		Yearly Total
	Q1	Q2		Q3	Q4	
Magnus	2	1	3	1	1	5
Summus	5	4	9	5	4	18
Extremus	5	6	11	5	6	22

3RD	Semester 1			Semester 2		Yearly Total
	Q1	Q2		Q3	Q4	
Magnus	2	1	3	1	1	5
Summus	4	4	8	4	4	16
Extremus	5	5	10	5	5	20

4TH	Semester 1			Semester 2		Yearly Total
	Q1	Q2		Q3	Q4	
Magnus	2	1	3	1	1	5
Summus	3	2	5	2	2	9
Extremus	4	3	7	3	3	13

5TH	Semester 1			Semester 2		Yearly Total
	Q1	Q2		Q3	Q4	
Magnus	2	1	3	1	1	5
Summus	3	2	5	2	2	9
Extremus	4	3	7	3	3	13

If students read from a list above their enrolled grade level, that book will count as two books read. A student may double count a total of one read book from the grade ahead during the year for Lector consideration. (This prevents an advanced fourth grade reader from reading all of his chosen selections from the fifth grade list, enabling him to gain a higher Lector recognition than a grade level fifth grader who has read more books.) For recognition of titles read above the level of Magnus Lector, students need only complete page 1 of the Lector Log.

#### References:

Adler, Mortimer and Van Doren, Charles. *How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972. Print

Bauer, Susan Wise and Wise, Jessie. *The Well-Trained Mind: A Guide to Classical Education at Home*. New York: Norton, 1999. Print

Miller, Christine. *Classical Christian Education Support Loop: 1000 Good Books List*. Classical Christian Homeschooling. April, 1997

[www.classicalhomeschooling.org/celoop/1000.html](http://www.classicalhomeschooling.org/celoop/1000.html)