

HELP!
I LOVE CM,
BUT...

SAMPLE

A QUICK TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE
FOR THE CHARLOTTE MASON
HOMESCHOOL PARENT

YEN CABAG

SAMPLE

Help! I love CM,
but...

*A Quick Troubleshooting Guide
for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg
Homeschool Parent*

Yen Cabag

Help! I Love CM, But...

(Philippine version)

Copyright © 2022 by Reinalyn Cabag

Available on CharlotteMasonInThePhilippines.Com

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission in written form from the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations in critical articles or reviews.

Printed in the Philippines.

CONTENTS

Why I Wrote This Book	7
How to Use This Book	11
Chapter 1 Expectations versus Reality	13
Chapter 2 Review: CM's Principles on Children	17
Chapter 3 Review: CM's Principles on Education	25
Chapter 4 Review: CM's Principles on Curriculum.....	31
Chapter 5. Review: CM's Principles on the Moral Life of Children	39
Chapter 6 Narration: Troubleshooting and Ways to Improve.....	45
Chapter 7 Most Common Reading- and Writing-Related Issues	77
Chapter 8 Most Common Subject-Related Issues	89
Chapter 9 Most Common Scheduling Issues	99
Chapter 10 Most Common Nature Study/outdoor time Challenges	117
Chapter 11 Most Common Handicraft Challenges	127
Chapter 12 Most Common "Riches" Challenges.....	135

Chapter 13 Most Common Reporting Challenges	145
Chapter 14 What Next?	149
Till Next Time	151
About the Author	153

WHY I WROTE THIS BOOK

When we first discovered the Charlotte Mason method, we were excited to try it out for our family. Everything about it appealed to me: the emphasis on nature study, the use of living books, letting the child narrate instead of requiring objective-type, memorization-dependent answers, the rich addition of music and art and handicraft.

We slowly incorporated the different components to our firstborn's homeschool, which began with a boxed curriculum bought from the U.S., while I continued learning more about the philosophy. During that time, homeschooling was still in the baby stages in the Philippines and especially in our city, so most of my learning happened online, through blogs, videos, and podcasts. Even then, we were very enthusiastic at sharing our homeschooling experience with friends who would listen.

It took a few years before some of them decided to try it out themselves. Because we'd been doing it for a while, we took on the role of guide, coach, cheerleader. That's not to say we've perfected it—far from it!—but at least we had a little bit of experience to share and encourage them by.

And then the 2020 pandemic hit, where a few more families—strangers this time—came under my “care” as Charlotte Mason coach. But because of the influx of families who needed a beautiful alternative for educating their children, urgently, almost, because of the pandemic, I

realized that most of them did not have the luxury of time that the rest of us who were already homeschoolers then had had in terms of researching and choosing what kind of philosophy they wanted to follow. In fact, many of them had been thrown into the homeschooling wagon all as a surprise, too!

The good thing is that when the pandemic rolled around, a few of us who have already benefited from the Charlotte Mason method have already been actively sharing the beauty of this way of education with many others. Different cities in the Philippines have little CM groups, and we believe it paved the way for more families to be able to apply this gentle approach to learning. In fact, you might even say it's become almost an "in" thing to do—to skip the textbooks and use these excellent living books for our children's education, introduce them to classical music and great masterpieces in art, keeping nature journals and all that.

But the truth is that, the Charlotte Mason method is more than just the things we do. In her book, she herself says that she does not attempt to tell us "do this, do that," and instead offers an invitation to "consider this."

Because of that, I've found that many who have jumped into the CM method may run into snags here and there and be tempted to quit! That's perfectly normal, because the CM philosophy runs counter to many of the things we've been taught growing up, or even the things that may be popular in our society at large.

So this little booklet is intended to help you troubleshoot some of the most common struggles,

especially for newbies, and hopefully encourage you to keep going. We believe in the long-term benefits of a CM education, which means that giving it only a year or less, and then giving up because the way seems hard, may not do it justice. We hope that the experience of many other CM homeschooling families that have gone before us can be a big help in finding ways to get around some of the most common issues.

And, that goes to say, you're not alone, Momma, and we're cheering you on!

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Because this book is designed as a “troubleshooting” guide, you don’t have to read it cover to cover. We have organized it in a way that we cover each major “theme” in the CM method in one chapter. That means you can flip straight to the chapter that you are struggling with. We will try our best to point you back to the main principles that Miss Mason advocates, so that, even in the midst of the struggle, you will see the value of why we do the things we do, and we hope that it can encourage you to keep going. We also hope to give some practical suggestions on how to make things easier; some of these come from the experience of other CM families, including those we’ve met personally or coached, or those we’ve read about from online CM forums and social media groups.

And since we expect you to use the book in this way—of just flipping to sections that you need at the moment, although some of you may want to read it cover-to-cover—you may find that some of the “advice” seems repetitive. That’s because we want the explanations for every issue to be as stand-alone as possible! If you are reading this book cover-to-cover, we ask our humblest apologies for that, and we hope you will simply take the similar ideas as helpful reminders!

However, we don’t claim to have all the answers to all the possible challenges you may face. Every family’s situation is unique, and we hope the principles and

practical examples can help you find what will work best for your family. We still highly recommend you to be connected to a homeschool community, preferably one that also follows the Charlotte Mason method, for mutual encouragement and sharing experiences.

This book also does not claim any expertise in areas that may be specific to a child's special education needs, such as for dyslexia, dysgraphia, and other conditions, and for that we recommend consulting with the appropriate professionals.

So without further ado, let's jump right in!

CHAPTER 1

EXPECTATIONS VERSUS REALITY

ADMIT IT. YOU HAD ALL THOSE LOFTY DREAMS OF SMILING children cuddling on the sofa, listening, eyes shining with an enchanted look, as you read aloud from a beautifully-illustrated book. As you turn the page, they would all hold their breaths, excited to hear what happens next. When you stop at the end of the chapter, they would groan and clamor for “just one more chapter.” Then, at your go signal, they would take turns, narrating, with their eyes twinkling in excitement and arms waving animatedly. You sigh as you take in all the beautiful ideas that they’re tossing around, and smile at all the learning that’s taking place. As you close the last book for the day and the kids disperse for outdoor play time, you can hardly wait to find out what happens next in the readings the next day.

But... reality check! What if instead of that idyllic picture you have in your mind’s eye, what you’re beholding everyday is chaos, quarrels, and a totally blank stare after you’ve just poured your heart and soul into dramatizing the spunky Pollyanna and read yourself hoarse?

Or, what if you heard a friend totally raving about an amazing nature spot, with beautifully-colored birds flying all around, and a trek to some waterfalls nearby? Sounds heavenly, right? But when you take your family there, what if all you get from your kids are complaints about mosquitoes, about how tired their feet are, or about not having Internet signal?

Or, you're quietly browsing through your phone, when you see other families posting the cute little amigurumi toys their daughters have crocheted. And here you are, struggling with even getting your child to crochet a chain!

Don't worry, you are totally not alone! I've helped coach plenty of families in the Charlotte Mason method, and many of us struggle with many of the same things. That's why I decided to write this little booklet, to help encourage you and find possible solutions to some of the things that may be getting you down.

Now, a little disclaimer is in place. I don't claim to be the expert on everything you may be undergoing in your homeschool! After all, the dynamics surrounding every family's homeschool experience are affected by so much

* * * * *

What if instead of that idyllic picture you have in your mind's eye, what you're beholding everyday is chaos, quarrels, and a totally blank stare after you've just poured your heart and soul into dramatizing the spunky Pollyanna and read yourself hoarse?

* * * * *

more than just the homeschool method. One family may have two parents working full-time, while another may have one parent staying fully at home and taking care of the kids' education. Yet another family may feature a single mom trying to juggle the responsibilities of homeschooling and earning the family income!

Instead, in this little book, I've sought to collect some of the most common complaints that beginning Charlotte Mason homeschoolers have. For each item, I will be pointing back to many of her principles, in order to keep us rooted in why we do what we do, and to help us trust the process. Some of these are actual experiences of families I've coached, while others I've gleaned from the many forums and social media groups I've been a part of. (If you are not yet part of any forum or support group on social media, consider getting into one. It spells a huge difference when you hear that other parents have the same struggles as you, and it encourages us all to keep going!)

Clearly, the Charlotte Mason method is not a quick-fix solution for our children's education. Instead, think of it as a long-term journey to beauty, which we take one step at a time. And yes, the method's commitment to exposing our children to the good, the true, and the beautiful is the main reason why I really want to help you get over the bumps, so

* * * * *

The Charlotte Mason method is not a quick-fix solution for our children's education. Instead, think of it as a long-term journey to beauty, which we take one step at a time.

* * * * *

that you, too, as a family, can reap its benefits.

So if this is your first year (or couple of years?) trying out the Charlotte Mason method, I encourage you to keep learning about it before you decide it doesn't work for you. If, perhaps, after you've gotten lots of feedback from mentors and fellow homeschoolers and still find that it's just not doable at this season in your life, don't feel bad about choosing to change your homeschool method. It doesn't mean that the Charlotte Mason method doesn't work, nor does it mean that you're a bad parent! Sometimes, we've just got to make adjustments to fit our family's needs during a certain life season. But I do hope you will still continue to add, here and there, some of the things from the CM method that makes life so much more beautiful and enjoyable, like music, art, nature, and excellent stories.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW: CM'S PRINCIPLES ON CHILDREN

NOW, BECAUSE YOU ARE LOOKING THROUGH THIS BOOK, I assume that it means you have already jumped into the Charlotte Mason method. I sincerely hope that it means you were able to read through her principles (or listened to videos about them), which helped you take the leap. If so, we hope this chapter can serve as a helpful review.

If it turns out that you chose the CM method without really having spent much time learning what she really advocated, we hope this chapter can help you get a bit more idea what the method is really all about.

But, we don't claim to cover everything, as this chapter is meant to be an overview kind of review; we still encourage you to continue learning about the philosophy, perhaps by reading through her volumes on Home Education with a friend or a group, or watching videos

created by other CM homeschool moms who have gone before us.

In case you're not aware even of who Charlotte Mason is, she lived during the 1800s, and established a school for training governesses how to teach children. She studied how children work best, and even tested her theories on the children of a mining community—the lowest of the lowest during her time, with fathers away on their mining work and the children practically left all to their own devices.

Now, if you're like most parents, we probably assume that children who come from parents who are also educated are the ones most likely to be well-educated, too. This is what the parents in Miss Mason's day believed, too, and she happily disproved that by applying her principles to these children of the mining community—who came alive happily narrating the stories they learned over the course of a few years!

She found that the principles of education she advocated worked no matter what the social background of the children were, or even what their parents' educational background was. This made her confident to share her principles, knowing that they can open the way for a liberal education for all.

So, this is also why I'm confident to share these important truths, because I believe that her principles can help propel our children's education to heights we never dreamed possible!

Let's start off with her principles surrounding the natural gifts that the Creator endowed our children with:

1. Children are born persons.

We view children as individuals, with unique gifts, strengths, and weaknesses, and it is our role as parents to discover—and cherish these individual traits. This means that our children are not empty vessels waiting to be filled, or a plant that we shape and mold according to our desires, nor outputs in a factory assembly line—which is, sadly, the kind of result that the traditional school system seems to work towards. Instead, each child is a special God-created being with his own unique gifts, and we get the privilege to discover, unfold, and release them to become a blessing in the world.

* * * * *

We view children as individuals, with unique gifts, strengths, and weaknesses, and it is our role as parents to discover—and cherish these individual traits.

* * * * *

2. They are not born either good or bad, but with possibilities for good and for evil.

Charlotte Mason based many of her principles on the Bible and believes that children are born with the propensity of doing either good or evil. This means that we are given a very important responsibility and privilege of

training our children to choose the good, the true, and the beautiful.

3. The principles of authority on the one hand, and of obedience on the other, are natural, necessary, and fundamental; but—

Miss Mason considers the principle of authority and obedience—for example, parental authority and the expected obedience from our children—as a foundation to all success in parenting. If you delve into her writings, she also expounds on the idea that we parents are also under a Higher Authority, God’s moral standard, and that our children need to understand that they obey us while we also obey God. Take a look at how she expounds this in Volume 1:

They must perceive that their Governors are Law-compelled.—Where is the beginning of this tangle, spoiling the lives of parent and child alike? In this: that the mother began with no sufficient sense of duty; she thought herself free to allow and disallow, to say and unsay, at pleasure, as if the child were hers to do what she liked with. The child has never discovered a background of must behind is mother's decisions; he does not know that she must not let him break his sister's playthings, gorge himself with cake, spoil the pleasure of other people, because these things are not right. Let the child perceive that his parents are law-compelled as well as he, that they

simply cannot allow him to do the things which have been forbidden, and he submits with the sweet meekness which belongs to his age. (Vol 1, page 15)

As parents, do we expect our children to obey our authority? Most likely, yes, and rightly so. But, do our children know that we ourselves are obedient to a Greater Authority? Do they know that our behavior is dictated by the moral code we hold onto, or that we obey God too in the decisions that we make?

According to Charlotte Mason, it makes a difference to children when they understand that we as parents are also obedient to a Greater Authority, and not just deciding everything based on our whims. We choose to do this or that thing because they are the right thing to do, not because we just feel like it. In the same way, we train them to do things, not because it's what we just feel like demanding of them at the moment, but because it's the right thing to do.

* * * * *

*Let the child perceive that his parents are law-compelled as well as he, that they simply cannot allow him to do the things which have been forbidden, and he submits with the sweet meekness which belongs to his age.
(Charlotte Mason, Home Education Vol 1, page 15)*

* * * * *

If you currently don't hold to a higher authority yourself, we encourage you to think about putting yourself under God's authority through Jesus Christ. We believe it

will spell a world of difference in the way your parent your children!

But note the little word “but” at the end. Yes, we expect our children to obey us by the undisputed importance of authority, but we also do not exercise our authority to the detriment of our children, as we can see in the next principle:

4. These principles are limited by the respect due to the personality of children. which must not be encroached upon whether by the direct use of fear or love, suggestion or influence, or by undue play upon any one natural desire.

Miss Mason places such a high value on children as individual persons, and therefore discourages us from using any outside force to encourage children to learn. Say that again?

This can be a bit of a challenge, especially for parents who are used to traditional school rewards like medals and honor roll recognition. There’s nothing inherently wrong with wanting to excel, but when we focus on external factors like being better than everyone else, it’s easy to sap out the joy of learning.

Instead, in the CM philosophy, we believe in the child’s natural love for learning. Did you hear that? All children naturally love to learn. The problem is that experiences in traditional school or even in the home before we knew

better may have affected that inherent desire. Now that we know the truth, we can work on cultivating, supporting, and encouraging more and more learning, simply for the joy and reward of knowing something. We believe this is a more powerful and sustainable model for encouraging children to learn.

5. Therefore, we are limited to three educational instruments—the atmosphere of environment, the discipline of habit, and the presentation of living ideas. The PNEU Motto is “Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, a life.”

Instead of relying on numerous tools and strategies, in the CM method, we focus on developing an atmosphere of learning, building good habits through discipline, and feeding our children with living ideas.

(We elaborate on these over the next points found in the next chapter, so read on!)

CHAPTER 6

NARRATION: TROUBLESHOOTING AND WAYS TO IMPROVE

AHH. NARRATION. WHEN YOU FIRST HEARD OF IT, LIKE me, you probably thought, “Wow, that’s amazing! It’s going to be so easy teaching my kids, because all I have to do is read to them, and then they will just tell me what they heard me read. Easy-peasy!”

Indeed, the concept of narration is simple. In fact, as Miss Mason herself tells us, children naturally narrate everything that happens to them. Isn’t it true that as soon as your toddler was able to speak, he would instinctively tell you something about what he did when you weren’t around? If Tito or Tita brought them to the mall or to the beach, they would excitedly tell you what they saw or what they ate.

What is Narration?

Narration is simply telling back what you read or hear after a single reading. This is because we believe that “knowledge is not assimilated until it is reproduced.”

How does this look? For younger children, the parent or teacher may be the one reading the book aloud, but after a scene or two, the parent stops and asks the child to recount what he has heard. For older children, they may read their school lessons themselves, but they also stop after, say, a few pages or so, and tell back what they read.

Until the child is about 10 years old, narration is done purely orally: that is, the child will simply talk about what has been read. At about 10 years old, when the child has already strengthened his writing and spelling skills, written narration begins, at a relatively slow pace of having one written narration per week, while doing all the others still as oral narration.

We utilize narration as a way of learning the lessons. After reading a passage or a page or two, the child narrates, or tells back, everything he heard (if the parent is reading it aloud) or read. We start with oral narration, with no writing yet, until the child is adept enough at it; and then, when we do introduce written narration, the child still continues to narrate orally. We believe this strengthens his communication skills more than any other practice!

Take a look at how Miss Mason describes it:

When the child is six, not earlier, let him narrate the fairy-tale which has been read to him, episode by episode, upon one hearing of each; the Bible tale read to him in the words of the Bible; the well-written animal story; (From Vol 1 page 232)

And here is another passage to inspire you:

In every case the reading should be consecutive from a well-chosen book. Before the reading for the day begins, the teacher should talk a little (and get the children to talk) about the last lesson, with a few words about what is to be read, in order that the children may be animated by expectation; but she should beware of explanation and, especially, of forestalling the narrative. Then, she may read two or three pages, enough to include an episode; after that, let her call upon the children to narrate,—in turns, if there be several of them. They not only narrate with spirit and accuracy, but succeed in catching the style of their author. (page 232-233)

Most Common Issues with Narration

Here are some of the most common issues that parents have when it comes to implementing narration, especially during the first couple of years—although sometimes it may still crop up beyond that, depending on how diligently we watch to keep good habits in place:

Challenge #1: My child is not listening.

Now, we don't claim to be an expert at pinpointing exactly why something is happening, but we would like to offer some possible causes, so that you can find ways to make things easier.

When your child is not listening to the books you are reading aloud, there are several factors to consider:

1. Is the student old enough to read the lessons himself?

Miss Mason recommends students who are able to read their lessons themselves to do so on their own. Unfortunately, if you transitioned to the CM method when the child is older, we normally recommend parents to read aloud to the child, or to have the child read aloud to the parent, in order to establish the habit of a single reading.

Sometimes, the child gets bored when he is underchallenged. Try to see if your child is already able to read the lessons himself. If so, let him do so and ask for narrations after every scene or two.

2. Does the child understand the language the book is in?

On our first year of homeschooling, I was excited to read the chapter books recommended in the boxed CM-inspired curriculum I bought to my 5-year-old son. These were chapter books with maybe one or two pictures per chapter of about 8 to 10 pages. It never occurred to me that English was not our first language, so while I trudged on the reading (trudged, because I myself wasn't used to the beautiful language by that time!), my son would stare at me blankly and not be able to understand a thing! That led to my getting burned out from homeschooling within the first two months, tossing all the books over to my husband!

Thankfully, I asked help in the forum of that boxed curriculum, and some moms who had more experience suggested taking a step back and reading him picture books. I had, sadly, not really done this because I didn't learn about the CM method until then! Apparently, the picture books would help get him familiar with the language. Sure enough, within a few months, he was able to pick back up on the first book that almost made me give up homeschooling! :)

3. Is the lesson time too long?

A child who can normally listen well to a reading may still struggle if the lesson drags on too long. Miss Mason recommends short lessons in order to utilize the child's full attention. What does this look like? For children in Form 1 (Grades 1 to 3), this can be about 10 to 15 minutes per lesson, which includes the reading and the narration. As

the child grows older, this extends to about 20-25 minutes, and finally to 30-45 minutes for students in high school.

If the assigned reading exceeds this time, we recommend splitting it up into multiple readings throughout the day or week. For example, if you are following a schedule that recommends reading 1 chapter of a given book for the day, and it takes you 15 minutes to get to the halfway point, note where you stop, and come back to it later, perhaps after singing a hymn or doing math work.

Or, if you are following a schedule divided into weeks and it says that you need to read 2 chapters for this week, you can split it up into four or five days instead of squeezing 1 chapter over one day and reading it over two days.

4. Have you switched up the lessons so as to use different parts of the brain?

Not only does Miss Mason recommend us to do short lessons, she also tells us to switch up the part of the brain that's being used when we schedule lessons.

What does this look like? It means we don't read all the lessons in one go for two hours straight. Instead, we intersperse all the reading time with other kinds of activities. For example, we might start the day with a Bible reading, then do a hymn before doing a history reading. Then, after history, we might have our child do copywork, and then read a biography lesson. After that might be

math, and then literature. Or you could even insert nature study time in between readings.

That way, we don't tire out our child's brain that's hard at work dealing with language by letting that part rest in between with other parts of the brain working, such as those dealing with math logic, music, or physical movement.

* * * * *

Miss Mason recommends us to do short lessons, and also tells us to switch up the part of the brain that's being used when we schedule lessons.

* * * * *

5. Are you reading at a time when he is most alert?

Sometimes the issue may be more practical than you thought. Miss Mason has studied children and found that children listen well to lessons done in literary, or well-written story, form. However, if the child is sleepy, tired, or hungry, it's totally understandable that he would have trouble concentrating.

This is one reason why the CM method usually does lessons only in the mornings, leaving the afternoons free for other activities. Of course, this is assuming that your family wakes up early in the mornings.

Admittedly, the modern-day lifestyle includes some parents working shifts that may not be the traditional

morning-to-afternoon schedule, which also inevitably affects our children's routine. One family I know used to homeschool starting lunch time, because the dad worked at the airport and had several graveyard shifts; another family I know in the US used to have the dad leave for work at 7 in the morning, so the mom had all the kids awake and doing chores by 5am so they could all have family time together over breakfast. We need to take into account the rhythm in our family and take into account which times our children are most alert, and sometimes it may take some tweaking of the schedule.

Other times, it may take some active movement to get the kids awake and alert, so also consider putting the reading times after some active play or physical exercise.

6. Does the child do lots of gadget games or screentime?

Now, this will not have been discussed in Miss Mason's writings, but we have found that children who do a lot of play on gadgets clearly struggle with paying attention. That means that if your kids play with phones or tablets a lot, it may not be the fault of the book, the lesson, or the CM philosophy.

Of course, each family has its own convictions about how much gadget use to allow our children...

END OF SAMPLE

***Did you enjoy this sample? You may purchase
the FULL PDF on
CharlotteMasonPhilippines.com/Shop.***

Meanwhile, thank you very much for journeying with us! Other Charlotte Mason resources we offer include:

- Talino Charlotte Mason Curriculum Kinder
- Talino Charlotte Mason Curriculum Form 1 (for students in Grades 1 to 3)
- Talino Charlotte Mason Curriculum Form 2 (for students in Grades 4 to 6)
- Talino Charlotte Mason Curriculum High School (for students in Grades 7 to 10)
- Finding Beauty in Hymn Study
- Tahúm Family Riches Guide
- Galing Copybook (Copywork, Recitation, and Dictation for Grades 4 to 6)
- Yaman Finance Curriculum for High School Filipino Students

• and more to come!

For more resources on Charlotte Mason and homeschooling in the Philippines, head on over to **CharlotteMasonPhilippines.Com**. Sign up for a free e-book, too, and get the chance to be the first to know our latest updates!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Based in Iloilo City, Yen Cabag is a homeschooling mom, writer, entrepreneur, and Charlotte Mason coach, trainer, and advocate, who loves reading, storytelling, and creating just about anything—from kitchen concoctions to stories, articles, songs, curriculum, and crochet pieces!

Growing up, her daily diet included a dose of Sweet Valley Twins, Sweet Valley Kids, and Sweet Valley High, only falling in love with classic books when she started learning and applying the Charlotte Mason philosophy in their homeschool and family life. Since then, her husband Mark has also jumped on the bandwagon, devouring books left and right, despite not having enjoyed it in his younger years. (Score for living books!)

Yen's favorite me-time activity is digging for treasure in one of the many branches of Booksale, while the family also loves walking or biking along the river on Iloilo Esplanade, spending time on the beach, snorkeling in one of the marine sanctuaries that Iloilo

is blessed with, and hiking/camping on the mountains.

Yen and Mark are also champions for fostering and adoption, with two of their three boys coming into the family through this beautiful gift.

Yen graduated magna cum laude for B.S. in Business Administration from the University of the Philippines in the Visayas, and went on to become a licensed teacher. She is currently taking up Master's in School Management.