



Narration - your child telling back what he's heard or read - is perhaps the most important key to making this kind of education work. Narration requires the higher-level mental activities of processing, sorting, sequencing, sifting and articulating information. Filling in blanks in a workbook can't match narration as a comprehension exercise. Oral narration is also the first step toward composition - the child becomes adept at articulating his thoughts in order, which is required in writing. Thoughts should be formulated in the mind before they are put on paper. Although simply 'telling back' is the most focused form of narration and probably the most challenging to the mental processes we are seeking to develop, some parents occasionally break up the usual routine by using other forms of narration, such as acting out, playing out, or drawing what children have heard. You can have a CM education without classical music, art, or Shakespeare--**but you can't have a CM education without narration from living books.** In fact, it isn't too extreme to say that a lesson that isn't narrated may be a wasted lesson!

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**Do** always prepare the passage carefully beforehand...the teacher should never have to stop in the middle of a paragraph to explain the meaning of a word. Make sure, before you start, that the meanings are known, and write all difficult proper names on the blackboard, leaving them there throughout the lesson. Similarly any map work which may be needed should be done before the reading starts.

**Do** regulate the length of the passage to be read before narration to the age of the children and the nature of the book.

**Do** let the narration follow directly after the reading.

**Don't** interrupt, even if the narrator makes a mistake or mispronounces a word.

**Don't** ever read a passage more than once, no matter how badly it has been narrated. It is permissible to ask, e.g., 'Don't you remember the bit about the horses?' If the children say 'No' the proper response is: 'What a pity! Now you will never know that bit. You must listen better next time.' The children will miss something, but they will have learnt a lesson in concentration.

**Do** always correct any mistakes after the narration, or better, get the other children to correct them.

**Don't** ask questions beyond the initial one at the beginning of the lesson, 'Where did we leave off last time?' This is the only kind of revision needed.

**Don't** press a child who has given a short narration to tell more. It sometimes happens that a very shy child makes a great effort and narrates one sentence. 'Good,' says the zealous teacher, 'And what happened next?' Whereupon the child retreats into his shell. The comment should be: 'That's right. Can someone else go on?' The shy child feels that he has made his contribution, and will have gained in confidence.

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